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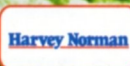
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044 Sim City 4

It's the game we were all playing while we were still in nappies, the game we came home from school to and the game we lost our virginity with (Wuh? - Ed). Finally Sim City is back, and we take a long hard look



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What gaming just doesn't have enough of is bikinis and sun-drenched resorts. Fortunately then, Spring Break plans to change all of that!



DEUS EX 2

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050 ONLINE GAMING

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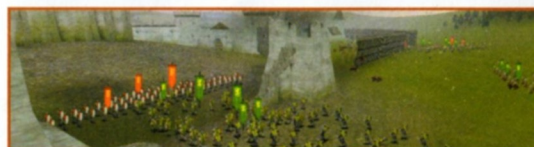
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**Don't you just hate this time**

of year? The weather is awkward, freezing one day, raining the next, you can't figure out what clothes to wear, there's never anything good on

TV, all the Quake3 servers have ridiculous pings and most importantly, there are hardly any good games getting released.

A few years ago, back in the 20th Century, the problem of the seasonal gaming drought - or El Lama as I like to call it - was much less pronounced. Maybe one issue out of 12 had a thin spread of game reviews on offer. Then, in 2000, it was two issues. And in 2001, when we started doing 13 issues a year instead of 12, it seemed like the whole middle part of the year - the winter months when games were most sorely needed - was devoid of significant titles. Who can forget PCPP#59 where we had to run with Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars as our lead review?

True, this month isn't quite that bad since we have Medieval: Total War in the lead backed up by the interesting (if not particularly good) Gore and the unexpected Conflict Desert Storm. All in all our reviews section this issue totals 14 games, but if you visit the PCPP Forums at

www.pcpowerplay.com.au/forums you'll find a number of threads demanding to know why so few games have been reviewed and what can be done

to get more in there. And here's the funny thing...

If I go back through our sizeable PCPP archive, I find that in October 1999 we reviewed 15 games, one more than this month. In October 1998 we reviewed 17 games. So the actual number of games hasn't really dwindled significantly, so it must be the quality that has people concerned.

The fact is, there just isn't a Warcraft 3 or a Neverwinter Nights released each month. It seems in these modern and exciting 21st Century days, there are several releases each year that eclipse all other games. Gaming has become mainstream, and floating down the mainstream come the inevitable Blockbusters that everyone gets so worked up about it makes other, just as worthy titles fade into the background.

So it's not that we've reviewed fewer games in 2002 than we did in 1998, it's just that in 1998 the market was fairer, more competitive and gave every title a fair go. Nowadays it seems all we're really interested in are the top tier titles, even if being top tier only really proves that a game has a bigger marketing budget than anyone else, or a more impressive 'pedigree', whatever that truly means.

PCPP will still continue to bring you in-depth and authoritative reviews of every significant title released in this country. It's up to us as PC game consumers to remember our roots, ignore the hype, and realise that just because a game isn't Warcraft 3, it's not any less worthy of our time. Game on!

Anthony Fordham

Editor

anthonyf@next.com.au



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INBOX

LETTER OF THE MONTH - XBOX SCHMUCKERY

Anthony, your little editorial section this month was a painful experience for me, for you showed both your biased side and your ignorant side in one swift stroke. I must congratulate you on ditching the Xbox section, not because I hate the Xbox but because your little Xbox section truly sucked. Whether or not they realise it, I believe that the people who sent you e-mails complaining about the Xbox section were in fact complaining because they didn't like the section, not because it featured the Xbox. You guys put up a crotchty little section giving an overall bad impression of the Xbox, making people think that the Xbox is really this plain and bad.

You also claimed that promising titles are just promises, because in the three months you had the section, these games are still not out. Well let me ask you this, when is Doom 3 out? It's not out right now is it? Or Unreal 2, or Unreal Tournament 2003, Deus Ex 2, Quake 4 and so on. This is the same case with Xbox games. Games that have high-profile and hyped as much as the games listed above are still being worked on.

Also, you are a PC person, its hard for you to enjoy great console games. For example, Project Gotham and Dead or Alive 3 will never be able to feel as good on the PC as they do on the Xbox. They may have slight visual improvements but who wants to sit in front of a monitor and keyboard to play a racer or beat-em-up? PCs are only good for FPS and RTS (although recent console tries have improved considerably). They maybe better spec-wise, but the environment and atmosphere is just not there. You may say that you can get all the peripherals on your PC that are out on the console, but just admit that it feels different.

Lastly, most great PC games will come out on the Xbox including all the big FPS and action games. But not all Xbox greats will come on the PC

Thanks to his militant attitude in regard to the Xbox section, Avatar picks up a copy of Medieval Total War from Activision. Let's see him stand up to a 5000 unit army! Archers, nock and loose!

for example, Blinx (Platformer), Panzer Dragoon (Shoot em up), Project Ego (RPG), Steel Battalion (Mech Simulation) and Brute Force (FPS and Team based FPS).

Don't be too cocky that the PC can perform all the tasks a console can. We are gamers, not computer technicians. Most gamers prefer the atmosphere, environment and gameplay a console offers. The new, top of the range PCs may have a small advantage over the Xbox specs-wise but graphics don't sell games, gameplay does.

Avatar



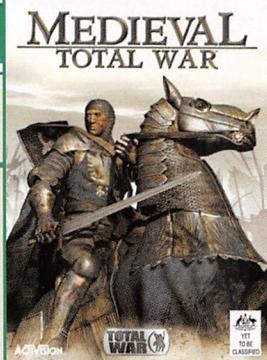
Well then, where do we begin? You make some excellent points there of course, Avatar, but there are a few things I'd like to disagree with. Firstly, recent market analysis shows that the PC arm of the software entertainment industry once again leads the pack, and that while the various consoles do add up to more game sales, PC sells the largest amount of games as a single platform. So, for June 2002, the PC made up 37% of game sales, while the poor Xbox only made up 8%. The next biggest platform is unsurprisingly PS2, with 27%. From these figures, we can see that most gamers prefer either PC or PS2, as they make up 64% of the market. And of that 64%, most of those people prefer PC. So in fact 'most gamers' are happy to use either PC or PS2, and newer consoles are still

struggling to find a market.

At the time of the Xbox's launch, only the graphics processor of the PC lagged behind

Microsoft's console to any significant degree. However, a scant handful of months later, PC enthusiasts can now choose from not only one or two, but a wide range of videocards that leave the Xbox gasping in the dust. Also, with the introduction of the Intel 845E motherboard supporting DDR RAM, 2GHz+ Pentium 4 systems are now quite affordable, and coupled with a GeForce4 Ti4600, constitute the most powerful gaming platform available. The PC does not have a 'slight' technical advantage over the Xbox. The PC has a MASSIVE technical advantage over the Xbox. Don't forget that despite all its pixel and vertex shaded trickery, for the majority of users the Xbox only has to render at 640x480 on a normal TV (and then size the image to 720x512) and 1024x768 on an HDTV. Even PCs running low-end GeForce2 cards can offer much higher resolutions.

Finally yes, we are happy to confess that the Xbox section was not nearly as interesting reading as the rest of the magazine. But that's not us attempting to sabotage the Xbox or show it in a negative light. It's probably just got to do with the fact that PC is a much more interesting platform. The vast sea of consoles may, collectively, have more games than the noble x86 but the BEST games will always be on PC.



BIG SWINGING DISCS

I noticed two things in PCPP#76 that got me thinking. Firstly, in the glorious 101 game E3 preview section, the V8 SuperCars game caught my eye simply because I noticed it was headed for PC DVD-ROM as opposed to the standard CD-ROM. My next thought was "Good on em, it's about time".

DVD-ROM is unquestionably the way of the future, and in gaming, it could have huge benefits for the industry. Firstly, developers and publishers worldwide should jump on the DVD bandwagon as soon as possible. Simply producing games on DVD would decrease piracy, tenfold. DVD Burners are at outrageous prices, and I've heard that burning formats and what not is still a big mess at this stage. Hence, it would be crazy for developers not to start churning out games this way.

Also, one of the "from the forums" posts in PCPP#76 was about how games aren't long enough. While this point alone is debatable, having 4.7GB of data storage as opposed to 700MB would be a good start for this cause. Not to mention how it would eliminate the need for multiple discs (to begin

with anyway, as game sizes will only get bigger). One can only salivate at the thought of games on multiple DVD discs.

If you don't have a DVD drive, tough. Go buy one, they are near enough to the price of new CD-ROMs these days, and should be part of your next upgrade.

DVD-ROM is a natural step for the gaming industry to take, and no doubt it will become mainstream soon enough. All I'm saying is, "soon enough" couldn't be any sooner!

Matthew Spratt

Ah sweet DVD, where would this fine magazine be without it? Everything Matt says is so true, and PCPP is proud to lead by example, being the first Australian mag to offer a regular DVD coverdisc. /plug. Anyway, a couple of things. First up, will moving games to DVD limit piracy? Sadly, it's unlikely. DVD burners are, to the unscrupulous, now perfectly affordable. Next month, see Stuart's roundup of six DVD burners that all come in under \$1500. For a serious pirate, the kind of pirate who actually sells his naughty

produce, \$1500 is similar to the outlay he made five years ago for a 2x CD burner.

However, the benefits of DVD to gamers would be most welcome. Multiple CD games such as Baldur's Gate have done much to piss off otherwise dedicated RPG fans, and certainly reduced the editor of this magazine's enjoyment of the title. And while we're on the subject, what's up with CD checking? We put in codes, we register our games, we suffer humiliatingly personal questions in the name of Product Activation, but we still have to have the bloody CD in the drive every time we want to play! And with distributors too cheap to give us jewel cases anymore (Neverwinter Nights, anyone?) that means scrabbling through a heap of loose CDs, getting sticky fingers on the read surface, risking scratches, and generally treating a \$90 investment like a crappy old cassette tape from the late eighties! End CD checking now, I say. It doesn't stop piracy, it just irritates legitimate customers.

Finally, games on multiple DVDs. Sounds futuristic, but it's actually already here. Pop down to your local EB, dig through the bargain bin and find

yourself a title called Schizm. Or you could contact Red Ant and get one sent out. It's a Myst-like puzzle game written by Australia's own sci-fi king Terry Dowling and created in Poland so it's... odd. It comes on 2 DVDs or some ridiculous number of CDs, much like the good old days of Strike Commander on 3.5" floppy.

BREAKING IN

I have an idea for a game, (probably like many of your readers, except it's not an FPS mod, not knocking mods tho). The genre has been around for a while but I believe my take on it is original and marketable. As a budding programmer the possibility of me making this grandiose idea into reality is way too off in the future to contemplate. Much of it is in my head, but I have started writing it down and should have enough material to make a fairly detailed manual with basic underlying physics/rules and maybe some programming concepts outlined, along with a reasonable vision statement.

My questions then are: What is required, and to what level of detail would a game idea have to be before approaching developers? Do developers take on board ideas by newbie coders? What type of deals are involved, either working with the developers, or them buying the idea, if they're interested? Lastly, how do you protect your intellectual property from the unscrupulous?

Grant Gully

And lo, you must verily point your browser to www.gamasutra.com, the ultimate site for game developers. Here, you can find articles, FAQs, first-hand accounts, everything you could possibly want to know about the hairy business of building games. And for all the industry gossip, scour www.fatbabies.com. We know we do.

However, when it comes to pitching a game, all things serve the Design Document. You must have a phat phile that presents every aspect of your game down to the last tiny detail. And it should be headed with a cover letter that explains, clearly and distinctly, how your game is going to make a lot of money. For instance, if you were to approach a publisher with a design doc which said "This game is basically Harry Potter meets Diablo 2 with a dash of Warcraft 3" then you'll probably get some interest. To find out the correct structure of a design document, do a search on Gamasutra for the Anatomy of a Design Document (requires registration).

As to protecting your ideas, it's simple. Take a copy of your design doc, sign, initial, date it and post it to yourself, Registered Mail. For added peace of mind, seek some legal advice and have a solicitor draw up a cover letter for you; our investigations suggest it should only cost about \$100 - which could well be worth it in the long run. Good luck!

AGAINST THE FLOW?

It's a shame that Xbox won't be featured in your fine mag. I have been LAN gaming with a select group of friends for almost 10 years, started with three comrades and Doom and now we're 12 people strong.

We recently invested in a couple of Xboxs and Halo which we all found great especially when you don't have time to get all the computers together. We all found the Xbox section much more useful than your DVD, Oracle, Flashback and that crappy comic that appeared lately, looks like we might be on the look out for a more complete mag.

Daniel Rutkowski

Well it's certainly a new perspective on the Xbox debate. However Daniel, if Halo is all you live for, you'll be pleased to know that Bungie's blockbuster is now headed for PC. Check out our lead Spotlight story for more details. Imagine Halo on PC - 1600x1200, 4x FSAA, and a whole 21" monitor each! Plus, not forgetting mouse and keyboard control, more multiplayer options, TCP/IP play, 32 and 64 player maps... someone mop up all this drool!

WE'RE DOOMED

When Doom was first released, I had my room set up with no natural lights and very little artificial light. I had good quality headphones (for my state of the art SoundBlaster card) and a huge 15" monitor. This set the stage for one of the best gaming experiences of my life.

People who were not around for the original release of Doom may not fully appreciate the atmosphere Doom created. I started the game playing it as though it was another Wolfenstein style game with guns blazing and no fear. I was soon at the edge of my seat jumping every time a Cacodemon came charging towards me. The addiction was strong though and hours seemed only like minutes. The game was so immersive that I even jumped whenever my mother came into the room to see if I was still alive. (I still get that a lot - Ed).

When Doom 2 was released, it captured the same essence and atmosphere as the first Doom. By this time I was a little older and my nerves a little shot. So I was over the moon to be able to play co-operative mode. It was still frightening but much more pleasurable to play knowing that there was a trustworthy friend watching your back.

From what I have been reading, it seems that Doom 3 does not have a co-operative mode and this is disappointing. My nerves are completely shot now and I will have difficulty getting through it by myself. Putting this aside though, I have no doubt that Doom 3 will be a worthy sequel to the first two and I will be looking forward to playing it.

Longtom

Ah sweet co-op mode, is there nothing finer? Why is Neverwinter Nights the best game ever? Not because of the graphics alone, nor the faithful application of 3rd edition AD&D rules, not the story. It's the co-op play that really makes it. Co-op Doom was, as Longtom attests, just fabulous. Although, for some reason, a lot of my games degenerated into Deathmatch with Monsters after I accidentally shot my best mate in Year 9 with the double-barrelled shotgun. Eight times in a row.

FROM THE FORUMS

WARCRAFT 3 NOT RPG ENOUGH?



In which the Forum crowd debate the virtues of the promised RPG elements in Warcraft 3. Join the debate at www.pcpowerplay.com.au/forums

Date Posted: Jul/15/2002 11:37 AM

The player should have been given a choice at certain points in the game which then lead to different missions. eg. killing Uther or not slaying the villagers, thus having alternate endings, and maybe a couple of different maps to play through. RTSs are always so linear, adding the RPG elements should have broken this trend.

Harnet, Tiegling

Date Posted: Jul/15/2002 1:56 PM

Yah you're right there, also the heroes should have more spell options, perhaps getting as close to Diablo style. Because by the time say a Paladin is at level 10 he is exactly the same as any other Paladin at level 10.

Superspazzy, Tiegling

Date Posted: Jul/15/2002 4:04 PM

Well, considering the full-fledged "RPGs" Blizzard has developed (Diablo 1 and 2) that's hardly surprising. It's still a big step back. I seem to remember having a degree of non-linearity of campaigns back in the days of Dune 2 and C&C.

Section8, Shambler

Date Posted: Jul/15/2002 6:04 PM

So true, although it is a great game they should hardly call it an RPG. I read on some preview that it had a spell option for heroes similar to Diablo 2. Oh how wrong they are.

nice_n_ezy, Skaarj

Date Posted: Jul/15/2002 11:05 PM

Fellas... Blizzard stated a very long time ago they changed the game from more RPG oriented to more traditional RTS with some minor elements associated with RPGs such as the hero system. I think it's fine the way it is.

[KW]TripleX, Tiegling

Date Posted: Jul/16/2002 1:05 AM

Warcraft 3 was meant to be a full blown RTS game with a few RPG elements. Even so, I feel ripped off.

Vooboy, Cacodemon

Date Posted: Jul/16/2002 2:28 AM

Who cares if Warcraft isn't 'RPG enough' it's an RTS. The RPG element is minor and adds something new to the RTS genre and works well with the game. In time Blizzard will probably elaborate upon these ideas. Warcraft 4 anyone?

sinisterlookingsock, Skaarj

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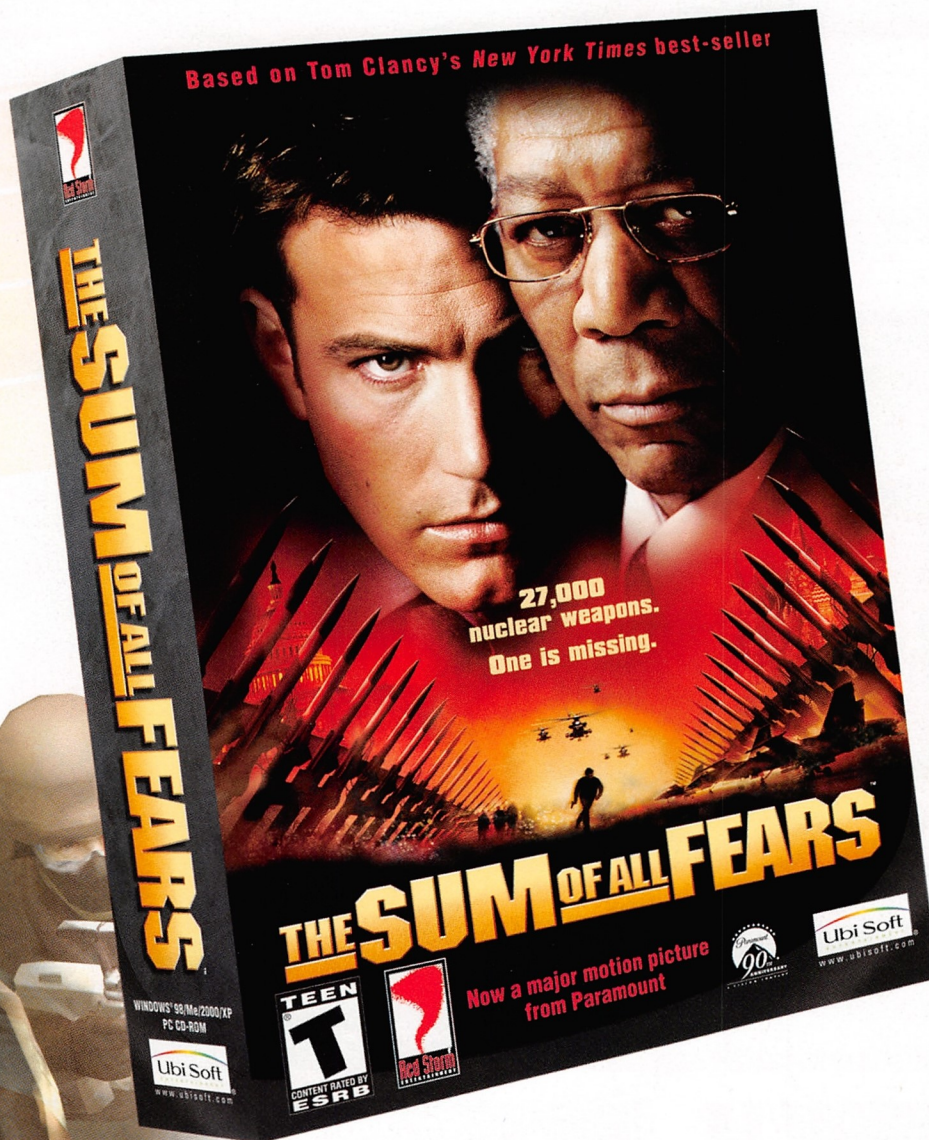
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"Wow what a great spa!" - "Uh... this isn't a spa."



Oh dear my expensive evening gown has fallen right off

SPRING BREAK

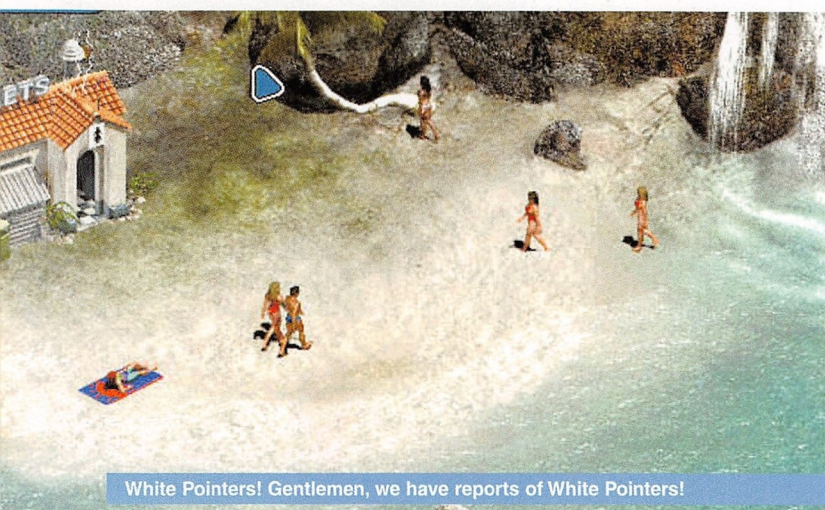
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What is Spring Break?

An isometric, sprite based resort management game that's half Tycoon, half Sim City and another half Sims. Too many halves you say? Spring Break promises unparalleled levels of niggly detail in managing not only the infrastructure of your island paradise but also catering to the selfish whims of every one of the inhabitants.

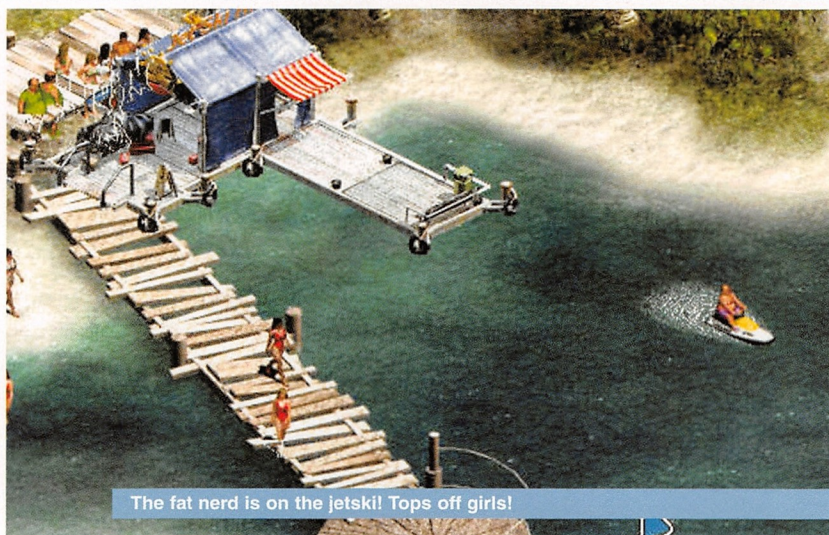
Man, that seriously looks like a gallows they're all joyfully dancing around...



White Pointers! Gentlemen, we have reports of White Pointers!



Those crazy nerds stole the ranger's jetski!



The fat nerd is on the jetski! Tops off girls!



Oh Corey, you're so funny, and so strong!

■ Developer: Deep Red ■ Publisher: Eidos ■ Distributor: GameNation ■ Due: August

Once, late night commercial television in Australia was a beautiful place. A place where Corey Feldman and a brace of topless bikini chicks were free to pursue their hopes and dreams through an endless series of nearly identical Californian beachside resorts. A place where whipped cream, cherries and the buttocks of good strong American woman could shine out; a place where nerds got lots of sex and the resort management were plunged into endless pits of raw sewage, poison ivy, rabid dogs and the occasional dominatrix state cop.

But then after a sadly successful campaign to ban such morally repugnant films as *Nerds*, *Nerds II*, *Meatballs*, and *Hot Chili* (remember that one boys?) and replace them with fine upstanding programs such as *Temptation Island*, late night TV in Australia became a sterile, uninteresting and above all resort-free place.

Enter *Spring Break*, to bring back at least some of the feeling of a quality B-grade late night Channel 10 movie (starring Corey Feldman). Billed by developer Deep Red as a cunning amalgam of *Sims Vacation* and

Resort Tycoon, the game is set to offer not only large-scale resort development, maintenance and management tasks, but will also allow for the monitoring and care of each individual visitor.

Instead of being nothing more than chirpy, amusingly animated sprites, the resort guests each have personal details, histories, and preferences for exactly what kind of bikini-clad relaxation activity they wish to spend most of their time doing. A helpful dialogue window will inform the player exactly what the visitor is currently doing, what the next three things are it wants to do, and what three things about the resort most bug it. This will allow not only for immediate action but also the formulation of more of a long-term plan.

Advancement in the game is governed not only by the almighty dollar, but also with a more complex popularity rating. It won't be enough to just rake in the cash, to really make it in the resort world the player will have to develop a holiday spot that has a certain degree of 'cool' associated with it. The more popular the resort, the more exotic the construction options.

Deep Red is promising a higher than

typical number of variables affecting the day to day running of a resort. For instance, when an activity or food outlet becomes super-popular (which is good) then massive queues form (which is bad) and people get grumpy. The best way to disperse an unsightly queue is to unexpectedly hike the price of a coke to something like \$12 a glass. Unfortunately, this has a strong negative impact on the popularity of the eatery, and then just to complicate things further, it might start to rain. And yes, there will also be sharks.

Tycoon games are always about establishing a happy equilibrium and then risking it all in an attempt to lurch forward into some new area of development. The *Sims* is about endlessly tweaking the microenvironment of an individual to keep them living to the standard which they have become accustomed. *Spring Break* may look like a Corey Feldman film (except with, incredibly, more bikinis) but hiding under the mounds of silicon is the promise of a deep engaging management title. Expect it before the spring thaw.

Anthony Fordham

Why Spring Break Deserves a Second Look:



Sims meets Tycoon for insane levels of detail

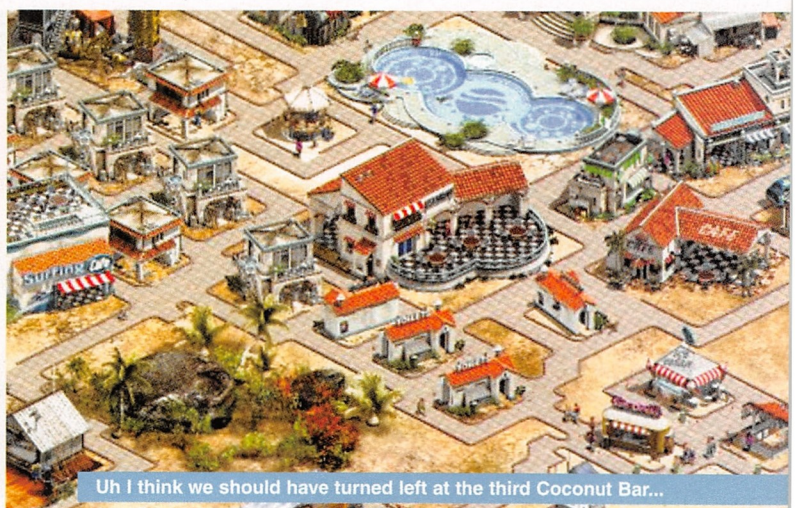
Ten thousand bikini babes in the palm of your hand

Environment affects the resort; rain, typhoons, shark attacks

Popularity rating means advancement isn't just about cash



"What's wrong with the pool?" - "Floaters."



Uh I think we should have turned left at the third Coconut Bar...



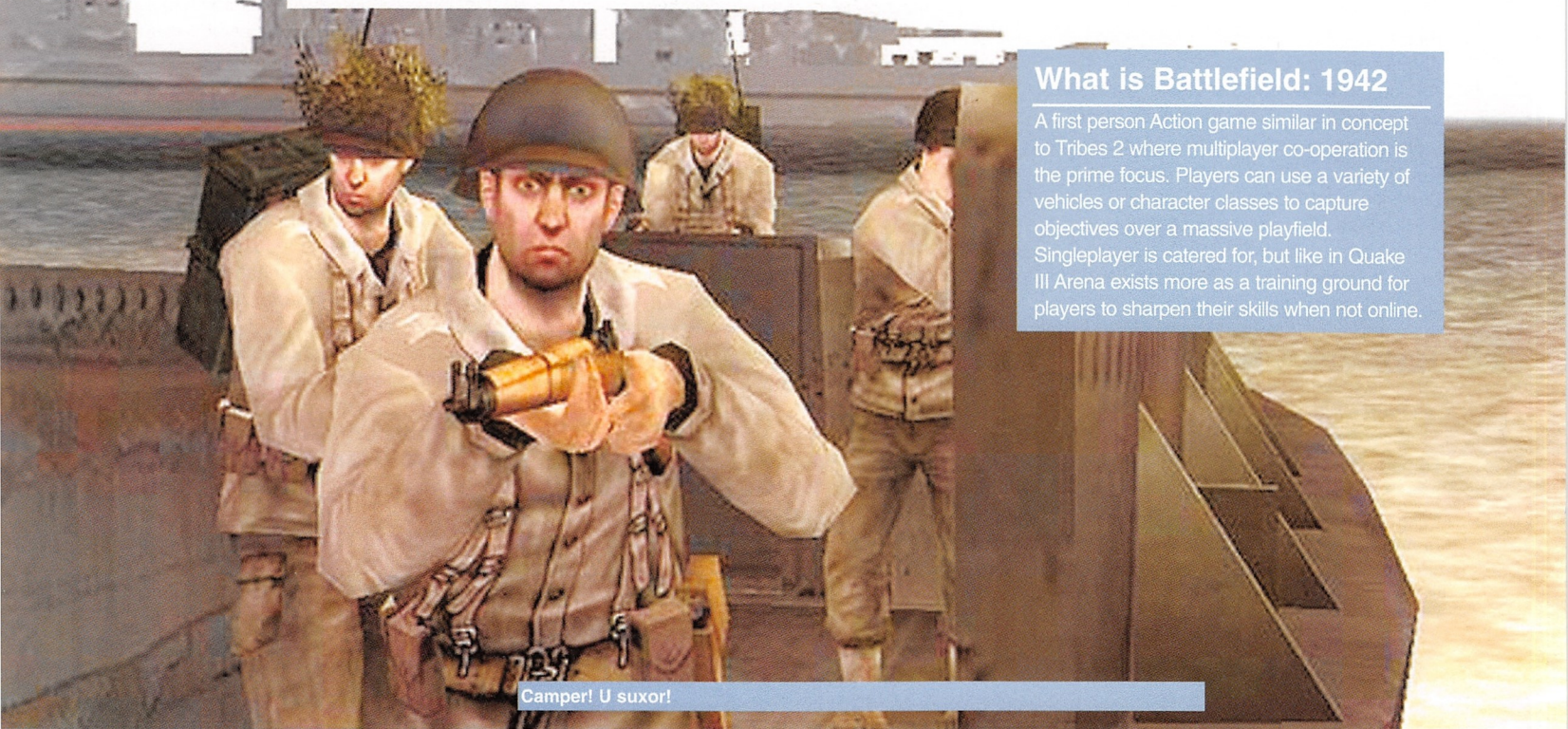
Tank rush u r lama suxor wallhack cheatbot!



Ph33r my 133+ carrier skillzors!

Battlefield: 1942

Because the horrors of war are best enjoyed together



Camper! U suxor!

What is Battlefield: 1942

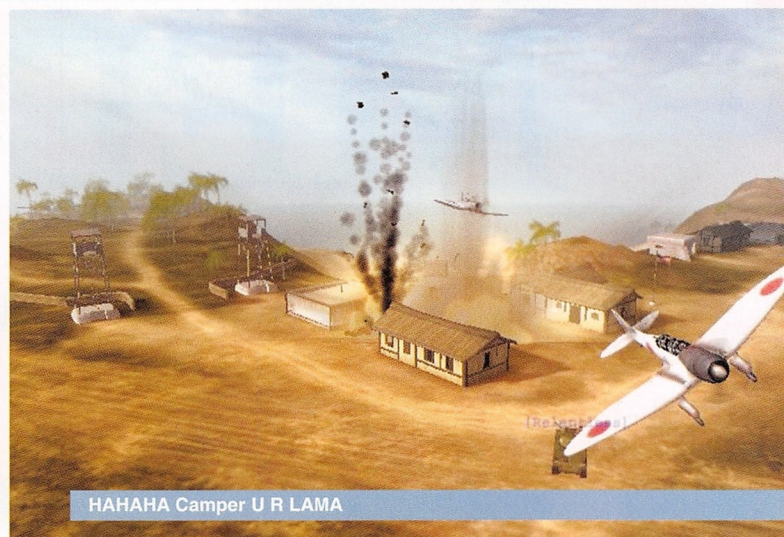
A first person Action game similar in concept to Tribes 2 where multiplayer co-operation is the prime focus. Players can use a variety of vehicles or character classes to capture objectives over a massive playfield. Singleplayer is catered for, but like in Quake III Arena exists more as a training ground for players to sharpen their skills when not online.



HAHAHA lama P-52 suxor ph33r my 133+ zero skillz!



Camping snipezor lama wallhack cheatbot sux! U R LAME!



■ Developer: Digital Illusions ■ Publisher: Electronic Arts ■ Distributor: TBA ■ Due: TBA

Part Medal of Honour, part Tribes 2,

Battlefield: 1942 is a squad-based action game set in the era of WWII which promises massive multiplayer battles across 16 huge open terrains spread out across four theatres of war in Europe and North Africa.

The best way to think of BF1942 is as an extremely advanced interpretation of Quake III. The single player campaign isn't a mission based linear game like what's common in the current glut of WWII games but instead places you inside the game world with allied bots that aid, and enemy bots intent on defeating you.

Called "Conquest Mode" you fight for territorial control of each map where the liberating of various locations earns "tickets". At the beginning of the mission, each team starts out with a number of tickets that are won or lost based on the capturing or losing of control points on the map - the winner is the side with all the tickets. The single player game however is little more than training for the core multiplayer experience which at release will support 64 players online. Although EA promises that BF1942 is to be primarily an action oriented

experience there's a wealth of nice touches to it. One pertinent example is that all the guns are historically accurate and feature realistic reloading time, firing and clip size. No small feat considering you can play as the American, British, Japanese, German or Russians, each with very different military hardware.

Vehicles play an important role in the game and include tanks, fighter planes, landing craft, destroyers, submarines, anti-aircraft guns, APCs, jeeps, artillery and battleships. Thankfully, the developers have remembered that this is an action game and vehicle physics are not realistically accurate, just simple and playable. Fighter planes are fast and manoeuvrable, Battleships are not.

Similar in principle to the vehicles in Tribes 2, they're not for solitary use but feature entry points for numerous players - jump in a jeep as the driver and pick up a team-mate to man the rear mounted machine gun. More than just mobility, vehicles have the potential to offer some incredible play experiences. For example, every player spawns with a

parachute so it's possible to jump in a plane, fly to a control point, jump out and parachute down to capture the objective. Meanwhile the pilot-less plane will spiral to the ground and explode in a heap of twisted metal which infantry could then take cover behind.

All multiplayer games these days feature some type of class system and BF1942 is no exception. Instead of choosing your class at the beginning of the game, kits are used to deck out each player with equipment appropriate to the role. The scout kit has Binoculars and a sniper rifle, the Anti-Tank kit a rocket launcher and there are also other kits for the medic and engineer just to name a few. When the opportunity presents itself you can also change class mid-game by picking up the kit of a fallen team mate.

With multiple classes, complete freedom of movement in the playfield, an action over realism focus and copious amounts of vehicles to utilise, BF1942 looks well positioned to become a leading action online game.

Jere Lawrence

Why Battlefield: 1942 Deserves a Second Look:

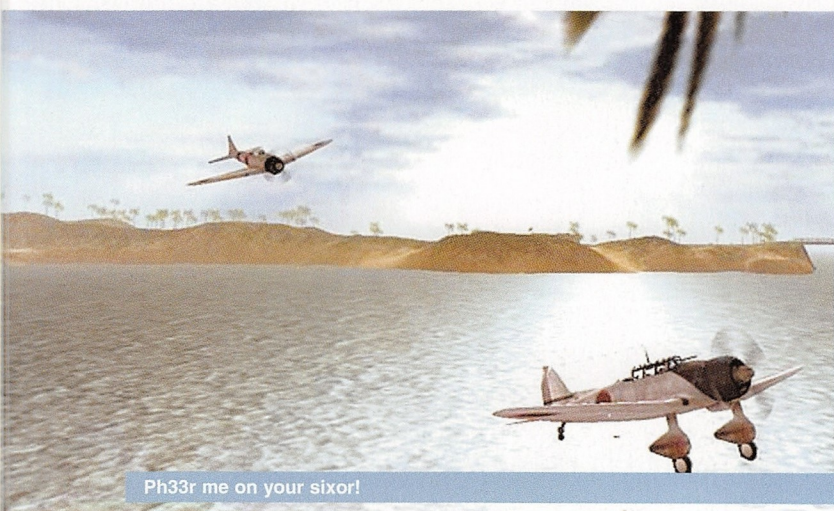


Massive and highly detailed WWII "theatres" to play in

Numerous vehicles to drive fly and sail

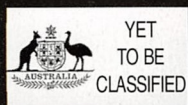
Several classes including: scout; anti-tank; medic and engineer

Squad based multiplayer as well as a single player campaign



MEDIEVAL TOTAL WAR™

SOME PEOPLE SAY WAR
DOESN'T SOLVE ANYTHING.



ACTIVISION

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activision.com



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totalwar.com



Spotlight

News from all quarters of the globe

Xbox 'exclusive' comes to PC

Halo Comes Full Circle



After all that hype and denial, Microsoft has at last announced that Halo is coming to both PC and Macintosh platforms. Both versions are being developed simultaneously for a release mid-2003.

Since Bungie is hard at work with the sequel, Gearbox Studios has been sent the call to action to rework the game for PC.

Gearbox specialises in tackling ports and expansions for huge titles, including one of the best expansion packs ever, Half-Life: Opposing Force. The developer has also worked on Counter-Strike and the PC version of

finally delivering on some of the promises that Bungie made back before Halo was bought by Microsoft.

Touted as the next big thing in multiplayer, many Halo fans - while loving the singleplayer action - were frustrated that they were limited to split-screen multiplayer games the Xbox provides.

Circular History

That Halo became an Xbox game at all was quite a coup for Microsoft. Halo began life as an RTS, following Bungie's success with the Myth series. The developers became enamoured with the Warthog jeep in particular and decided to make a roam-anywhere action/adventure game. This was soon distilled into an action essence and the

"Now people will be able to play Halo as God intended, on their PCs..."

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3.

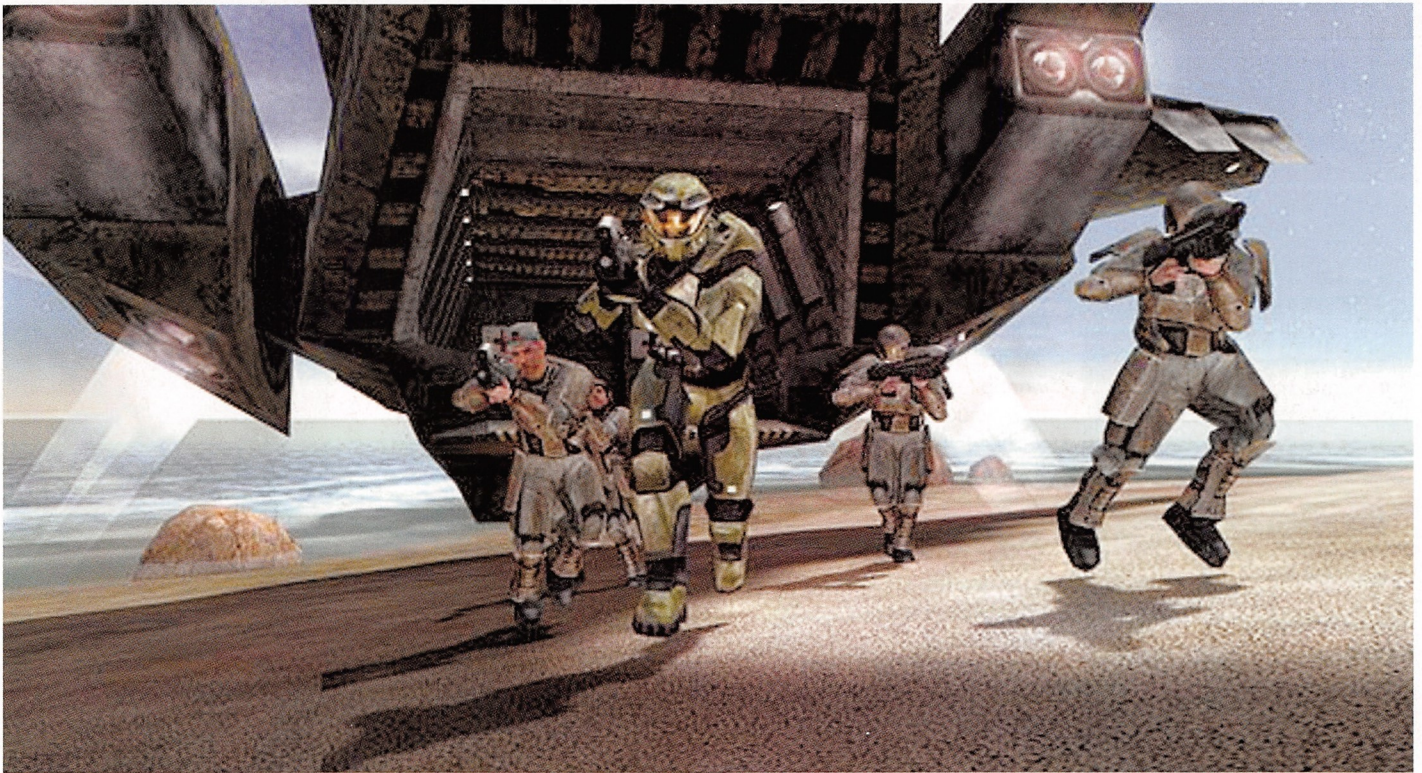
"Gearbox has the experience and the talent to not only bring Halo to the PC," said Gearbox President Randy Pitchford, "but also to add enhancements that exploit the multiplayer capabilities that PCs are known for."

It is expected that Gearbox will re-work and greatly expand the multiplayer aspects of the game,

Halo we know today.

Halo made its debut at MacWorld '99 and Mac gamers, starved of quality games, got very excited. It was later seen at E3, astounding gamers and cynical jaded members of the press alike. The graphics were awesome and the multiplayer potential had chins wagging and jaws dropping.

Microsoft noticed this and realised it might just be the killer app needed to sell their Xbox.



After the news of Bungie's purchase, Microsoft games spokesman, Ed Fries, got up at MacWorld New York and promised the Mac-ites they wouldn't be left out in the cold.

When Xbox hit the scene Halo came out marked Xbox Only. Emails flooded the Net asking if the game would ever come out for the PC. Although Bungie always claimed the game would be released eventually on PC and Mac, fan's fears were not eased when Halo went on to be the real success story for Microsoft's console, selling its first million units quicker than any other next-gen title.

Microsoft's latest announcement comes two years after MacWorld 2000. Now people will be able to play Halo as God intended, on their PCs at higher resolutions and over the Internet.

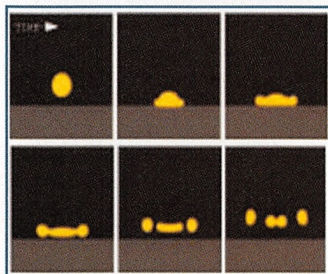


One assumes that although Microsoft is being tight-lipped about the additional game content, it should be quite significant to warrant a year's delay and to entice spurned PC owners back to the fold (especially in the face of a rumoured Xbox-exclusive Halo 2 launch only months later).

If Halo 2 is hot on the heels of the PC version we can expect an array of new features in the port as well as a strong network component: what better way to build desire for the sequel bound for Xbox On-line?



BYTESIZE



LIQUID LIGHT

Particle, wave and now liquid. Using special materials which slow light passing through them to different degrees depending on the intensity of the beam, scientists have observed light to act like a liquid. Pulses of light under these conditions concentrate because the edges slow more than the centre and they display surface tension properties and shatter like a droplet. Next, optical computers and world domination!

NOT SO OPEN GL

Microsoft has come out claiming it might own technology vital to the workings of Open GL. Specifically, it says it has claims to vertex programming and fragment shading. It first warned of its intellectual property rights in March but clarified them at the July meeting of the Open GL Architectural Review Board. Microsoft hasn't indicated what action it might take.

BROW BEATEN

Six high school students were disqualified from a Judo tournament in Utsunomiya, north of Tokyo, because they shaved their eyebrows down to a fashionable fine line. The kids were kicked out of the tournament to teach them a lesson and because the sleek look gave them "an unfair advantage" because they were too distracting and intimidating to the other opponents.

BAD CLOWNS

Three men dressed as clowns held up a shopkeeper with a shotgun before being chased through downtown Manchester. Their white van was involved in three separate accidents before the clowns fled on foot and escaped with a small amount of money. Police are hoping someone noticed the offenders escaping the scene (What the hell does this have to do with gaming? - Ed).

They Came From Hollywood

Massively multiple movie mayhem

Aliens vs Predator is finally coming to the big screen and all thanks to Fox Studio's AvP games.

For a long time AvP was put on hold because of licensing difficulties arising from different studios owning each arse-whooping extra-terrestrial, but they worked it out for the game and now they're working it out for the film based on the game (based on the comics, based on the movies).

Paul Anderson has been given the job of directing the film adaptation. He's guy behind Resident Evil, Mortal Kombat and Event Horizon.

Meanwhile, Columbia Pictures has picked up the license to bring Return to Castle Wolfenstein to the silver screen and a movie based on Rare's Nintendo hit, Perfect Dark, has also been given the green light.

Flip it around and in Games Based on Movies news, Korean company Phantagram is gearing up to bring the world a Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon massively multiplayer game.

Plans are to immerse players in a world of fast-paced martial arts action, while still providing a deep and cinematic storyline like the one found in the movie. There is some scepticism about

Phantagram's ability to make a game which is fast enough to reproduce the feel and responsiveness of martial arts while still be practical across servers of thousands of people. The company has given itself until 2004 to make it happen.

Ang Lee has signed on for two more films in the series, a prequel (Precious Sword, Gold Hairpin) and a sequel (Sword Force, Pearl Shine) - so the game should have a lot of help in the hype department (Dude are those names for real? - Ed).

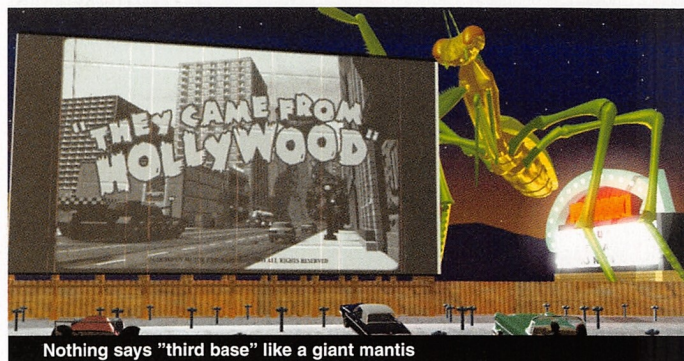
To round out our month's movie mayhem, Octopus Motors has in the works an isometric RTS based on 50s B-movies such as Attack of the Killer 50-Foot Cars that Ate my Two Headed Man, called - you guessed it - They Came From Hollywood.



Predator pr0n! Cool!



That's a good trick



Nothing says "third base" like a giant mantis

Beware the Hedgehog

Game company buying-guide

Sega's senior executives have revealed a plan to be the US's second largest games publisher by the end of the year and have an eye for the number one spot for 2004. Part of their strategy involves some serious spending.

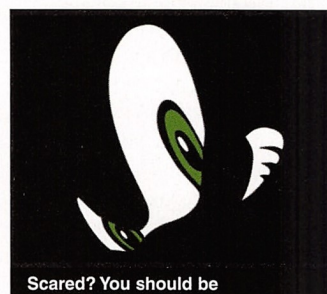
Sega Vice President Charles Bellfield said that the only publisher that they could rule out as a possible purchase was industry number one EA, with its US\$1.7 billion revenue. Many of the smaller, public companies were on the menu, with Acclaim, 3DO, Midway and Interplay all being within Sega's price-range.

Investors are taking Sega's plans so seriously that after a report in the Wall Street Journal

shares in Infogrames jumped 23% based on the possibility of a Sonic takeover.



What the hell is that orange thing?



Scared? You should be



The new EA?

FORGOTTEN REALMS

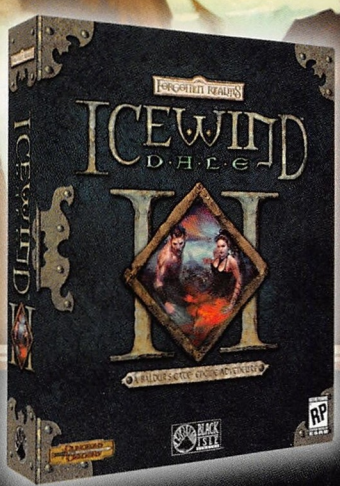
ICEWIND DALE



"Icewind Dale II looks to be a fitting capstone to the wave of truly excellent party based role playing games."

IGN.com

coming
SOON



yet to be
classified



BiOWARE
INFINITY ENGINE



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www.custommatrix.com offers you the opportunity to express your creative side in the exciting medium of shoe. You select the style of shoe you'd like (runner, sneaker, skate, casual, slip-on), the fabric, the colour, the logos, the lace-up style, sole specification and then Custommatrix makes them for you. Oh the abominations which shall be released to walk the Earth!

WORLD OF GAMING

Figures from London's Datamonitor's ResearchWire shows that as console gaming reaches its peak in 2004 the three major games zones should all hold roughly equal sway. Games software sales should be approximately \$7.6 billion in the Asia Pacific region, \$7.4 billion in the US and \$6.7 billion in Europe. All those figures are in US Dollars folks.

RTSQUEST?

Sony has announced that Rapid Eye Entertainment is developing an EverQuest RTS for the PC. Although you might not have heard of Rapid Eye, it was founded by Mark Caldwell (who was the leader of the original team responsible for the hugely successful Might & Magic and Heroes of M&M series). EverQuest has also announced a PS2 version. Impure EverCrack is set to flood the streets!

FAKING HARRY

Harry Potter has appeared in a new novel in China. Apparently, Harry has lost his powers; is a fat hairy dwarf; dead characters have re-appeared and JK Rowling is writing as if she's been struck on the head. Rumour has it that it's a fake! The Masterpiece is elegantly titled "Harry Potter and Leopard Walk up to Dragon" and is being sold for a couple of bucks in Beijing where it has become an instant hit.

nVIDIA-Takes it Home to Mum

More technical wizardry on its way

Usually having soundcards and 3D graphics accelerators built into your motherboard just means you have something to switch off at the BIOS screen. nVIDIA is trying to change all that with its nForce 2 family of processors for use in next-gen motherboards.

Nvidia developed the integrated multimedia system for the Xbox; and making audio, video and memory management systems for PCs that work hand in hand seems to make a lot of sense.

The platform has been designed for AMD Athlon and Duron processors with the goal of eliminating the bottlenecks which stop consumers getting the most from their PCs.

The rundown of features nVIDIA cites include blistering internal communication using a

high speed data bus incorporating technology usually found only at CPU level, the industry's only dual 64-bit DDR400 architecture as well as intelligent, look-ahead caching. nVIDIA claims these features plus the integrated design allows communication between the CPU and the multimedia hardware (such as graphics and sound cards) up to 16 times the peak bandwidth of systems using a PCI 133 bus.

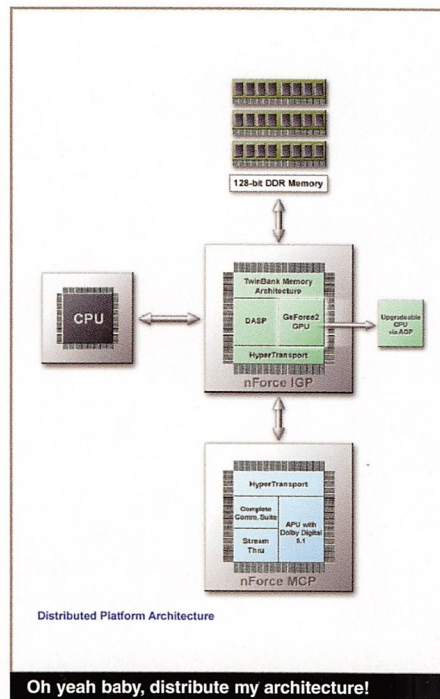
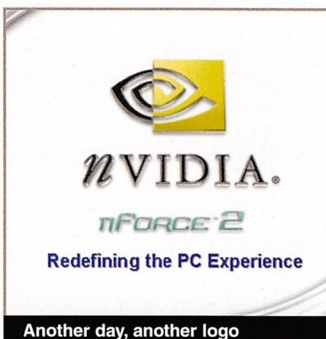
Another advantage is that integrated multimedia gear will leave a lot of free room in your case. The onboard graphics card is a GeForce4 MX with Antialiasing, DVD decoding, TV decoder, a high definition TV processor and multi-monitor support. Oh, there's also an 8x AGP slot if you need to break land speed records in graphics processing.

The platform can also come decked out with nVIDIA SoundStorm audio, which supports true Dolby 5.1 surround (as well as a real-time Dolby

digital encoder) and a host of other features.

Finally, there's support for up to six USB 2.0 ports and three firewire, as well as ports for simultaneous connections to both a LAN (local area network) and a WAN (Wide Area Network).

Production of the nForce2 is set for August and we should start to see the gear by September.

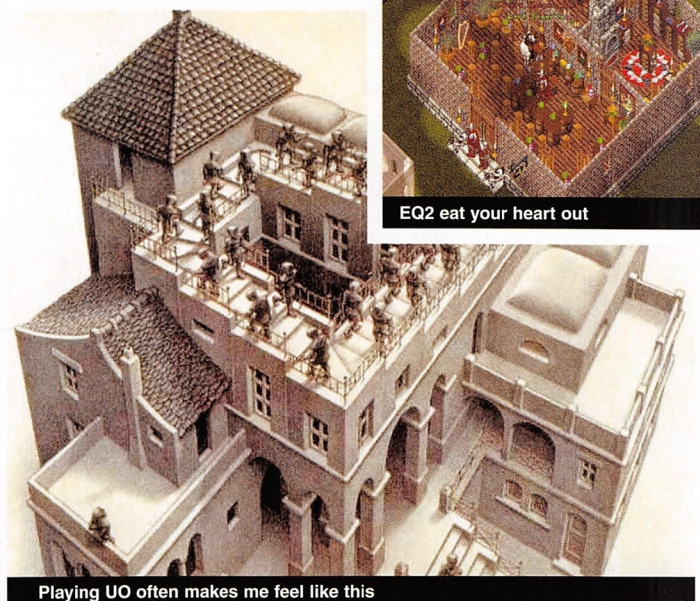


UO: Age of Shadows

Britannia gets renovated

Ultima Online is being expanded once again. The magic system has been beefed, as has the range of hand-to-hand combat techniques and selection of weapons. Paladin and Necromancer classes are also being added. There is a new realm to explore, and settle, as well as expanded housing (American dream = Ultima dream).

The most exciting development in Ultima really is the House Creation Tool. This will allow the more roleplaying, home-proud, players to build their domiciles from scratch or to modify their existing homesteads into a unique expression of their inner self. Due early 2003.



Playing UO often makes me feel like this



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You're the best trained, best equipped Special Forces squad in the world. You have been deployed deep behind enemy lines where the terrain and conditions are barbaric. You will seek, locate and destroy the enemy while creating havoc and confusion against insane odds.



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BYTESIZE



WIRELESS PLAY?

Wireless gaming is already topping revenues of a billion dollars a year, so watch out for WAPQuest. 87% of all gaming revenue comes from the Asia-Pacific region and is generated by subscription or pay-to-play model billing, and we know it ain't us in Australia doing the playing or the paying. Most of this is due to the roll out of the advanced iMode telecommunications technology in the land of the rising sun (He means Japan - Ed), which allows mobiles phones greater Internet connectivity.

P4 NOTE-BROOK

Hitachi has started promoting a water-cooled, 1.8GHz mobile P4 notebook for sale in Japan. According to them the water is of equal efficiency to air cooling, but much quieter. What we like about the Flora Silent Model is that it cools the water in a transparent tank on the back of the LCD. Now, if only there was a place to put the ground coffee...



EVERTRADE?

Crushing people with a warhammer might not be an act of niceness but at least it leaves their credit rating intact. German developer Duplex is working on a massively multiplayer game based on economic power. You control a government institution, corporation or clan and have to grind your competition into the ground. Greed is good.

Lionheart

History Gets Special

L ionheart takes hard history right up to the Third Crusade clash between Saladin and Richard the Lionheart and then gets freaky. Instead of the truce we know of, Richard breaks the stalemate by gathering together powerful artefacts after some bad advice.

His advisor turns out to be an evil occultist and the artefacts are the ones present at creation. Bringing them together starts to unmake the world unleashing demons and waves of magic. Richard and Saladin see no good can come

of this and team up to close the rift and whoop arse.

In 1588 your character is introduced to this world mirroring our own but twisted by magic. Besides the interesting backdrop this RPG has a SPECIAL touch.

Reflexive and Black Isle have dusted off the SPECIAL character creation and development system, made popular by the seminal Fallout series of role-playing games. We should see it all in action late 2002.



Do you feel special yet?



I feel special

U.S. Wants 1337 Soldiers

Games as a recruiting tool? Really?

The demo of America's Army: Operations Recon has been unleashed on the civilian populace. When the game is finished in September it will be on offer for free. The US army has decided to jump on the FPS bandwagon and what better way to sell the glamour roles in the armed forces?

It seems to be working. In merely the first 36 hours after the initial release HomeLan servers had half a million authentications for people wanting a game.

Updates have already started coming in. The first was Sniper

School, followed by Airborne School and Ranger School.

If you're into Unreal-engine based propaganda check it out at: <http://www.americasarmy.com/>



Bastardise the little rotter!



Get your heads in the head and start flushing, privates!

Vivendi gets Rebellion

French Publisher to bring us Judge Dredd

V ivendi's International
Development Unit, NDA,
has signed on to publish
Rebellion's Judge Dread vs Judge
Death shooter.

There have been more than one very average Dredd games, not to even mention the Sly movie, but Rebellion seems to be doing its level best to make this trip to Megacity One Dreddful... in a good way. Its Asura engine is looking very impressive with its graphic-novel stylings and the team promise a story that is original but which fits seamlessly into the 2000AD continuum.

We've heard it all before but after Rebellion's sterling job at delivering a dark collision of worlds for Aliens vs Predator, Dredd seems to be in good hands.



Now I'm scared



Bring in Sly Stallone, he'll make it HEAPS better!

DVD MOVIE STUDIO



Panasonic

Everything you need to create DVD movies

Pinnacle Systems, a worldwide leader in digital video, and Panasonic, a leader in DVD technology, jointly announce DVD Movie Studio, a complete PC upgrade solution for making DVD movies. Using DVD Movie Studio, users can create DVDs from their home movies that can be watched on the vast majority of consumer DVD players. Pinnacle Studio 7 allows you to capture and edit footage on your PC. Add titles, scene transitions, customise sound tracks and more. Pinnacle Express then burns the material to DVD or VCD, S-VCD or back to your DV camera. The Panasonic DVD-RAM/R burner can also be used to backup PC data, copy DVD media (subject to copyright) or simply watch DVD Movies.

Capture. Edit. Burn.

- Capture movies from your DV Camcorder via the supplied firewire card
- Edit scenes, add effects & titles
- Add DVD navigation buttons & chapters
- Burn to DVD on the Panasonic DVD-RAM/R drive
- Preserve and share your memories on DVD
- write and re-write data on DVD-RAM like hard drive (100,000 times)
- DVD Utilities and Region coding software included

Features include:

- Keep your movies digital transfer from DV to PC to DVD
- Ideal for DVD movie creation or for back up of PC data (up to 9.4GB on one disk)
- Transfer video footage from your DV camcorder via the supplied Firewire card
- Edit, add soundtracks titles, effects and extra features with Pinnacle Studio 7.
- Be assured of compatibility with DVD-R. The format approved by the DVD forum.
- DVD-RAM is like a hard drive. Drag and drop files from Windows Explorer (r)
- Create Music CD's, DVD-ROM's or simply archive and back up with Primo DVD.
- Watch DVD movies with Cyberlink Power DVD (included)
- Everything to get you started in DVD creation.

The bundle includes:

- DV/ Firewire™ Interface Card
- Pinnacle Studio 7 SE
- Pinnacle Express
- Panasonic DVD-R/RAM Burner
- Cyberlink Power DVD software (VR Support)
- Veritas Primo DVD data burning software
- 1x 4.7GB DVD-R disc, 1x 4.7GB DVD-RAM disc
- IDE Cable, Firewire™ Cable, Drive Mounting Screws
- Hardware Installation Manuals
- Online software guides.
- Region coding software
- DVD diagnostic tools and drivers



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DVD-RAM/R DRIVE

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care
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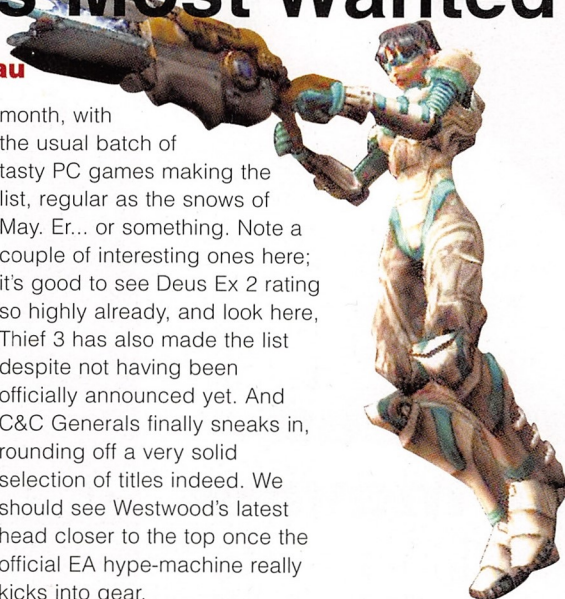
Harvey Norman

Australia's Most Wanted

Send your entries to
amw@pcpowerplay.com.au

And so it begins. With Warcraft III and Neverwinter Nights now released and charging through the actual sales charts, all you readers have cut loose and started drooling over Doom3 and Unreal Tournament 2003. The eternal battle begins! Sure, they're completely different games, but the memories of the old Q3A/UT running street battles are slow to fade. Remember when it used to be Duke3D vs Quake? Oh what heady days they were! Beyond the Big Two, the AMW chart shows very little change this

month, with the usual batch of tasty PC games making the list, regular as the snows of May. Er... or something. Note a couple of interesting ones here; it's good to see Deus Ex 2 rating so highly already, and look here, Thief 3 has also made the list despite not having been officially announced yet. And C&C Generals finally sneaks in, rounding off a very solid selection of titles indeed. We should see Westwood's latest head closer to the top once the official EA hype-machine really kicks into gear.



AUSTRALIA'S MOST WANTED	
1	Unreal Tournament 2003
2	Doom 3
3	Deus Ex 2
4	Age of Mythology
5	Icwind Dale 2
6	Masters of Orion 3
7	Thief 3
8	Project IGI 2
9	Arx Fatalis
10	C&C Generals

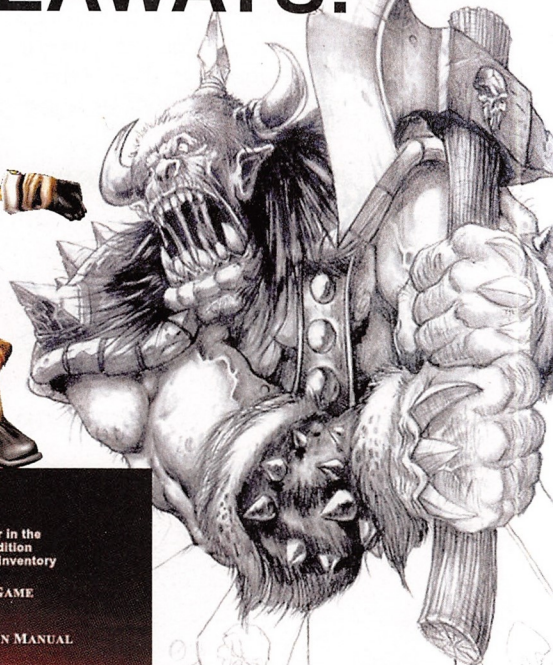
MORE WARCRAFT III GIVEAWAYS!

This time it's the Special Edition!

It's insane! Warcraft III has broken all sorts of sales records and still tops the charts, not just of PC games but all games sold in this great land of ours! To this end, Vivendi has gone into generosity overdrive and provided even more Warcrafty goodness for your delectation. Truly dedicated readers will of course flip to page 34 and sign up for a subscription and a chance to win the Warcraft III Special Edition along with a fab 19" monitor. However, we understand that some folks might already be subscribers or might have lost their chequebooks (go on, look behind the sofa one more time) so we've managed to acquire not only five more copies of the game, but also an extra Special Edition pack. Now, this is one hell of a pack. You get the game, the soundtrack, a special DVD containing all the in-game cinematics in 'enhanced mode', a bunch of slick lithographic prints and a sweet Art of Warcraft book, more than 150 pages of artwork, sketches and more! The whole shebang comes in a sweet leather case like mum's silverware, and - as they say on the TV - it's valued at more than \$150!

So quickly, grab your pen and the lyrics of your favourite pop song. Now convert that song so it has more of a Warcrafty flavour, and remember to include a verse about how awesome the Special Edition is. Send in your

new lyrics to the address below. The best song will receive the coveted Special Edition, and five runners up will receive an 'ordinary' copy of the game - but this is Warcraft III, so it's hardly ordinary. Get cracking! And no, there are no extra points for recording yourself singing the song and sending it in on CD - Goddamnit people we're only human!



Send entries to:
Orc Me Baby One More Time
C/- PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016



TOP
10PC Games
Over \$30W/E 21 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

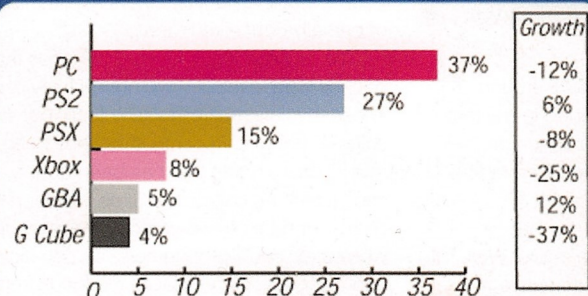
- | | | | |
|----|---|------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | ◆ | WarCraft 3 | Strategy |
| 2 | ◆ | Neverwinter Nights | RPG |
| 3 | ◆ | The Sims Vacation | Strategy |
| 4 | ◆ | The Sims | Strategy |
| 5 | ▲ | Soldier of Fortune 2: Dble H | Action |
| 6 | ▲ | EA Sports V8 Challenge | Racing |
| 7 | ▼ | The Sims Hot Date | Strategy |
| 8 | ▼ | Grand Theft Auto 3 | Adventure |
| 9 | ◆ | The Sims Collectors Edition | Strategy |
| 10 | ◆ | Elder Scrolls 3: Morrowind | RPG |

TOP
10All Full Priced
GamesW/E 21 July 2002
RETAIL SALES

- | | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | ◆ | WarCraft 3 | PC/MAC |
| 2 | ▲ | Medal Of Honor: Frontline | PlayStation 2 |
| 3 | ▼ | Grand Theft Auto 3 | PlayStation 2 |
| 4 | ◆ | Neverwinter Nights | PC/MAC |
| 5 | ▲ | Halo - Combat Evolved | Xbox |
| 6 | ▼ | Spider-Man: The Movie | PlayStation 2 |
| 7 | ▲ | Vampire Night | PlayStation 2 |
| 8 | ▲ | Super Smash Bros: Melee | GameCube |
| 9 | ◆ | The Sims Vacation | PC/MAC |
| 10 | ⊕ | The Sims | PC/MAC |

MARKET WATCH

All Games by Platform

MAY 02 vs JUNE 02
RETAIL SALES

dr claw



Dear Reader,

As Legal Representation for Mr Eric Funtmyrtle (AKA 'dr claw') we regret to inform you that the current edition of this Column has been omitted on Legal Advice, pending an Investigation into the Activities of this Magazine and its Decision to Allow Mr Funtmyrtle to write for it. We at Baker, Baker, Baker, Baker, Baker and Odd believe that in Allowing Mr Funtmyrtle to write for this Magazine, this Magazine has exposed Mr Funtmyrtle to Ridicule, Scorn and Chunks of Concrete Hurlled in the Playground at both Mr Funtmyrtle's Home and his Place of Education. For Mr

Funtmyrtle's continued Protection, he has been placed in Chains in a Safe in a Disused Warehouse on the Bad Side of Town. Any Person or Persons who have Read Mr Funtmyrtle's Column should immediately seek Legal Advice as they too may be Liable for Prosecution under one of many Stupid Laws. Mr Funtmyrtle's Column may appear in the next issue of this Magazine or it may Not, depending on the Results of this Legal Action.

Yours Sincerely,

**M Baker (no not the first Baker
the third Baker)
Baker, Baker, Baker, Baker and
Odd, Solicitors**

COMING SOON

August 2002

Air Warrior 3 (THQ)
 Alex Fergusson Player Manager (Ubi Soft)
 Batman: Vengeance (Ubi Soft)
 Chess Advantage 3 (Red Ant)
 Medieval: Total War (Activision)
 Sum of All Fears (Ubi Soft)
 Table Soccer (THQ)
 Tetris World (THQ)
 Major League Baseball (Take2)

September 2002

Madden NFL 2003 (EA)
 Battlefield 1942 (EA)
 NHL 2003 (EA)
 The Sims Unleashed (EA)
 Dragon's Lair 3D (Ubi Soft)
 Largo Winch (Ubi Soft)
 Cubix (Take2)
 Stronghold: Crusader (Take2)

October 2002

Sovereign (Ubi Soft)
 Metropolis Mania (Ubi Soft)
 Sea Dogs 2 (Ubi Soft)
 Battle Realms: Winter of the Wolf (Ubi Soft)
 IL2 Sturmovik Add-On (Ubi Soft)
 Airlines 2 (Take2)
 Airport Tycoon 2 (Take2)
 DX: Vietcong (Take2)
 Iron Storm (Take2)
 NFS Hot Pursuit 2 (EA)
 NASCAR Thunder 2003 (EA)
 Black Hawk Down (EA)
 FIFA 2003 (EA)





To appreciate future shock give your grandparents your latest mobile phone and tell them to take a photo with it.

To appreciate the binary opposite, "Where's the Future?" Shock, talk to a gamer.

With revolutionary videocards offering Lightning Memory Architecture and dual Vertex and Pixel Shaders released every six months, and CPUs halving in price even as they double or triple in power, the actual machinery of gaming is now several generations ahead of the actual games themselves.

Let's look at the current top five selling PC games: Warcraft III, Neverwinter Nights, The Sims on Holiday, Grand Theft Auto 3 and Solider of Fortune II. What we've got here is a failure to innovate.

The Inform Top 10 shows a bunch of sequels, an expansion and Neverwinter Nights which is the follow-up D&D role-playing game, from the creators of the Baldur's Gate series, also D&D role-playing games. Sure, there is a cool DM mode and toolset, but 16 colour STUNTS had a track editor and Dungeon Keeper popularised monster possession back in 1997.

Warcraft III was going to feature heavy role-playing elements but as Blizzard playtested the game it just didn't seem quite 'WarCrafty' enough so the developer changed the emphasis and cranked out another hit real-time strategy title. This was great for those of us who love the series, but it was hardly experimental.



Deus Ex - how would YOU have pitched it?

Close Encounter

Four years ago I saw a revolutionary title. It was a true 3D RTS. It debuted at 1998's E3 - a full year before Dark Reign 2. Not only was it 3D but it was possible to zoom out from a standard overview RTS setting right in to look at individual units at a battlefield level. This was also a year before Black & White's zooming magic went on display, but beyond just zooming in to see the units you could take first-person control of any of them whether they be a tank, chopper, soldier or doodad.

What made this all more impressive was the level of customisation available: you could change armour thickness at the expense of speed, put in bigger engines at the cost of fuel efficiency, add more guns, make decoy

The Revolution will not be Televised

vehicles which were little more than rolling bombs and more.

Finally, the game looked great and was all-Australian. It was called Wartorn.

An online search will throw up plenty of pages from 1998 lauding the game. A PCPP back-issue search will find these glowing words: "While multimillion dollar international developers struggle, Woy Woy outfit Eyst has beaten the world with a brilliantly playable, thoroughly addictive game that looks to deliver the goods."

Unfortunately, Eyst didn't manage to deliver the goods, despite being self-funded, having great industry buzz and amazing games technology.

One of the problems with pushing the envelope is sometimes it pushes back. Although Eyst's technology was great it didn't live in a vacuum. Delays materialised when, at a crucial stage, the developer discovered that the new, improved iteration of DirectX did some things differently to the previous version which really screwed with Eyst's core code. Of course, on the way to innovation you expect these things. Once Wartorn was recoded, the game was looking good and almost ready to go.



Put on Eyst

Now all they had to do was shop it around. Eyst's founder, Ben Moss, confided in me that some publishers actually had a space on their forms for "what is your game like, for example Quake, Command & Conquer, etc."

Could you imagine answering that question for something like Deus Ex? Well, it's a shooter like Quake ... no, a detective adventure game like Gabriel Knight ... er, actually, it's a role-playing game like ... oh hell, it's like Deus Ex ... that's why we're making it!

Moss had the same problem and publishers, fearing a marketing nightmare, stayed away from it in droves. Eyst had to go back into the code to change the game to make it more like something else just to get it published (much like the de-RPGing process Warcraft III went through). Finally it came out but not before the Dark Reign II hype machine kicked in. The point is: how many of



Wartorn - doomed from day one?

you ever even heard of Wartorn? It missed its window and slotted into the role of a gimmicky RTS and not the exciting 'something new' it could have been if the publishers had jumped onboard from the outset. I'm not saying the marketing people were wrong, it might not have made a cent with all its outlandish ideas, but at the time it would have been a leap forward.

It Sounds Like a Whisper

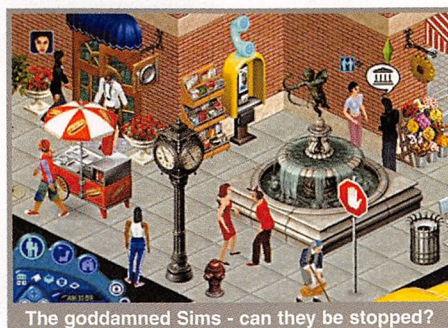
That's not to say there are no jumps forward. There are games like Black & White and Deus Ex, pushed through by huge personalities in the gaming world. Both were special projects coming out of moneyed-up studios free to keep marketing people out of development and under their marketing rocks. Even with this freedom, experience and free hype, look at the mixed reviews both games copped. Some people saw the genius, others saw a mishmash of partially conceived ideas.

The biggest leaps forward are ones that slip past us. The revolution will not be televised. These revolutions aren't flashy tech, but simple shifts in thought. Recently, there has been a revolutionary game that has been hugely successful. It's called The Sims. It's been in the charts for nigh on two years now. It's reaching a whole new section of gamers. It's non-violent, non-competitive and moves the focus from saving the world to getting to work on time and nurturing your friends' feelings.

I know what you're thinking: "Great, let's just have a big, hippy love in! Yay, more touchy-feely girlie games." That's not what I'm saying at all. All I'm saying is that revolution kicks in from angles you don't expect and that's what defines it. Looking for a shooter that lets you use any object in the world, shoot through any surface, bounce shots off walls and use physics God wishes he'd thought up is all well and good but is never going to break past evolution into revolution.

Revolution comes from left field and usually is so off-kilter we don't notice it, because if we did, we probably wouldn't buy it.

Until I can complete the epic game by circumventing all the sneaking, killing and collecting and just seduce the evil Baroness, Sims-style, with masterful daily use of theatre tickets, top shelf spirits and a hot tub I'm going get back to Warcraft III. I hear it's the best one yet.



The goddamned Sims - can they be stopped?

RECLAIM THE EARTH!

COMING SOON

"Soldiers Of Anarchy looks like it's shaping up to be a refreshing change of pace from most conventional real-time strategy games."

Preview - GameSpot PC

It's 2013. 10 years ago, a fanatical cult caused a near apocalypse on the Earth. To survive, you and a group of military veterans went underground. Now, you emerge to a world enslaved by the cult. You must free humanity from its new oppressors.

Controlling a fully customizable squad of up to 12 soldiers, you work your way through a scarred landscape. Starting with only a pistol, your squad must locate and recapture the weapons of modern warcraft and do battle. But be careful because all weapons and vehicles can also be commandeered by the enemy, even in mid-battle — and used against you, too.

S.O.A stands alone in terms of the player's ability to fully control and customize each member of his squad, all weapons and all vehicles. With superb AI and a powerful 3D engine, you will play in fully-destructible environments with an incredibly flexible camera through rain and snow and wind, during the day and the night. With 23 single player missions through a rich and exciting storyline and various multiplayer options, S.O.A is the title gamers have been waiting for.





Privatise Richard Alston

Australian gamers are under attack.

Our rights, our privileges and our future are all under threat thanks to the shortsightedness of our Government and one man in particular, Senator Richard Alston. How does one old fossil have so much influence on your leisure time? He's the Minister for Privatising Telstra and Handing Over Datacasting to Murdoch and Packer.

In June of 1998 our Glorious Leaders enacted into law The Broadcasting Services Amendment (Digital Television and Datacasting) Bill. It allows the three commercial broadcasters to keep an iron grip on what you watch on TV until 2008. New players are prevented from delivering cheap Internet services to home television sets. The impact on Australians still grappling with poor copper wire bandwidth is obvious.

Digital television is a cheap, effective way of delivering Internet services to country areas suffering from bandwidth problems and lack of competition with Telstra. Instead of being opened up to competition however, the spectrum will now be used by the existing free-to-air operators, Channels Seven, Nine and Ten, the ABC and the SBS, to transmit analogue television and 20 hours per week of High Definition Television (HDTV) until 2008.

White Elephants?

HDTV was mandated in 1998 in a deal between the Government and Kerry Packer. Isn't it nice to know that your elected officials are prepared to make a deal with just one man that affects all Australians? Hmm, and what a deal it was. While HDTV delivers an excellent picture to those with the thousands of dollars to buy the necessary equipment (the upper classes of the Liberal Party's all new 19th Century Australia), it is also a

bandwidth hungry white elephant that has been used as a convenient excuse to support a monopoly on broadcast licenses.

The other advantage of Digital broadcasting is that it is relatively low-cost to broadcast and has a much wider spectrum to broadcast on. Bandwidth that could be given to competition, real competition to the tired and boring commercial TV channels that purport to entertain us. Competition now denied to Australians.

The cost to the taxpayer of allowing the existing TV networks to keep control of the 21MHz of digital spectrum is approximately \$3 billion. In short Alston and the Liberals made a deal with Big Media which at the time seemed incredibly generous and more than slightly over the top. However the decision comes into focus when you consider a few important facts.

And Now the Facts

Back in 1998 the Federal Coalition had a 1.5% margin over Labour in most seats around the country. Come election time, incumbent Governments usually suffer a 2% swing against them, just from the normal amount of bad will accrued over time. In other words the next election result was looking grim for Richard and Johnny and all their little wizards. Along comes the Datacasting legislation and a chance for the Government to throw \$3 billion dollars into the lap of Packer and Murdoch without raising any eyebrows or causing any public outcry. In short, a bribe.

So what did our Glorious Leaders get in return for their unexplainable generosity? Does the phrase Children Overboard ring any bells? Alston and Howard give our media moguls \$3 billion dollars, our media moguls give Alston and Howard another term in office. Simple, efficient and a credit to our news journalists, who are so much better educated and professional than games writers, and couldn't possibly have missed anything so bleeding obvious, could they? No of course not. Well, actually, they do work

mostly for Packer and Murdoch. Free speech? Alston has made it little more than a theory in this country.

Cynicism Overdrive

If that blatant manipulation and corruption isn't enough to curl your mouse pad Alston and Howard are right now, as you read this inflammatory document, trying to drum up support for the full sale of Telstra, the world's biggest monopoly. Why is this bad? Simple. A Public company has to increase in size and profitability every year or shareholders get jittery and sell, which makes the share price and hence the company's value decline.

Telstra is already being forced to squeeze every aspect of its operations and all of its customers dry to meet this demand as a result of the privatisation that has already occurred. Why else do we have the highest broadband access costs in the civilised world? Full privatisation would see us in the position of handing the world's biggest and most profitable monopoly over to, who? The public? Rubbish. To people whose job it will be to squeeze and squeeze and squeeze so hard we'll end up paying Telstra for our phone books every year.

One of the biggest opposition groups to full privatisation is the rural lobby, so what does the Government do? The same thing it seems to do to every problem it faces, tries to bribe its way out of trouble. On the 17th of June, Alston announced a \$20 million 'incentive' for rural communities to accept full privatisation. In short, our government is using your tax dollars to bribe farmers into denying you access to the kind of services that the rest of the world is starting to take for granted. Nice one.

Aphorisms away!

Of course this is all being done for YOUR benefit! It's obvious that we'd all be better off with the fox in charge of the hen house, wouldn't we? While watch the rest of the world enjoy the benefits of broadband access and digital broadcasting we can sit back in our bark huts with our wind-up modems and thank Alston for this brave new world of monopoly driven greed and government complicity. Gamers, this isn't just an attack on you and your lifestyle, it is an attack on the Australian way of life. A fair go for all? Alston and Howard seem hell bent on recreating a society of privilege and insular conformity akin to 19th Century England, not 21st Century Australia.

The Guerilla Gamer is a veteran games journalist who has drunk deeply from the cup of bitterness. While his views are always forwarded with the best of intentions, naturally PCPP doesn't not necessarily agree with them, nor do we participate in any of his bizarre protests. Especially not the nude ones.



Bwahahahaha! I don't get it

PC
CD
ROM

Rage of War Celtic Kings

"The detailed graphics, monstrous maps, and innovative RTS features are sure to garner it some attention. If the gameplay is as good throughout the game, Haemimont could have a real winner on its hands."

Preview: The Adrenaline Vault

"Measured against many of the current 2D real-time strategy titles of this year, Celtic Kings looks really good."

Preview: IGN.com



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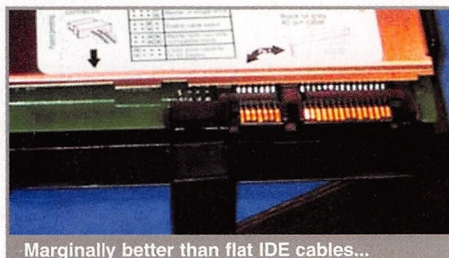
Celtic Kings: Rage Of War © 2000 - 2002 Haemimont Games, Sofia, Bulgaria. Exclusively distributed by Red Ant Enterprises Pty Ltd. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners.



I'm not really that old but my first PC didn't have a hard drive. It was an expensive Apple IIe with a 5 1/4" diskette because HDDs were for rocket scientists at NASA. Even just two years ago drive upgrades were costing serious bucks. Now, after a recent expansion, I've got disk space to burn. The genesis of this month's storage topic grew from a number of readers and friends asking about safe deletion of files from their systems to save space. It crystallised when Brandt Cers wrote in with problems about removing Medal of Honor from his machine and I thought "How can people be running out of space in their systems?" MOH:AA isn't that old and most of us can't afford the latest and greatest each month so space must be at a premium for a significant portion of the PC owning population. Clearly, space management has become a pain in the arse but it shouldn't be. There are gamers who think nothing of spending a thousand dollars each year on video adaptors yet, by today's 120GB-standards, they often have tiny hard-drives. By the time you read this a 40GB disk will cost less than \$130. Even if you're stuck with an ATA-33/66 board, you're still future-proofing if you upgrade. However, you do now need to consider technology on the horizon.

Choices Schmoices

PC users are faced with an increasingly bewildering range choices for their system components: AMD or Intel and motherboard to match; SDRAM, RDRAM or DDR RAM; EIDE or SCSI hard disks. More recently hard drive decisions include USB or FireWire connectivity. Depending on your choices, the process of upgrading can be easy going, moderately infuriating or simply impossible. Very soon, Serial ATA (S-ATA) will force another choice upon us, the implications are very, very real and I'm not altogether happy. Most PCs today use a parallel bus interface, lately referred to as Ultra ATA, using a wide, flat ribbon cable that can be a pig to route in your case if you even bother. The parallel ATA interface has been around a while now, and allows up to two devices to be daisy-chained to a single port using a master/slave communication technique called an unterminated multi-drop bus (Everyone got that? - Ed).



Marginally better than flat IDE cables...

PLATTER-TUDINAL?

What is Serial ATA?

The backers of S-ATA say that physically and electrically, the current parallel ATA bus has run into limitations that will prevent it from providing higher speeds of data transfer. The speed of S-ATA for the initial phase is 150 MB/s, rising to 350 MB/s within five years at very low voltage on a thin cable using small motherboard traces.

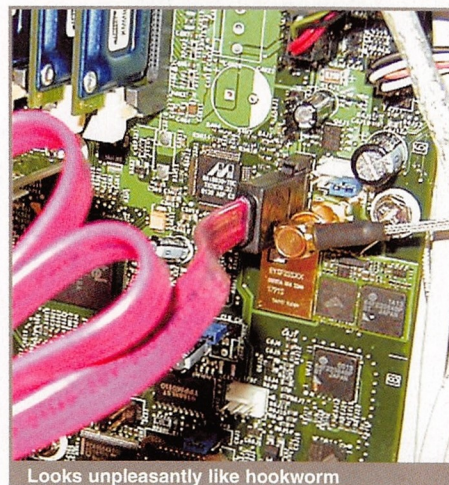
Proponents of S-ATA hope it will become the primary storage interface inside the PC. S-ATA wraps many bits of data into a packet and is able to transfer the packet at a proposed higher speed than current parallel. Cyclic Redundancy Checking (CRC) is performed on the data being transmitted back and forth as well as the actual ATA commands for improved reliability. The S-ATA structure connects two drives with individual cables in a point-to-point fashion and system software views the two devices as if they were both masters on separate ports just like FireWire.

The S-ATA homepage at serialata.org informs us that there's no software dependency and it's transparent to the operating system; configuration is easier without any jumpers; device architectures are smaller and cheaper;



performance/dollar costs will still be significantly lower than SCSI drives; bandwidth will exceed current ATA standards; each device will get full bandwidth because of the star topology; there will be a standardised connector for all drive types, i.e. 5.25", 3.5" and the 2.5" notebook versions; fewer signals in the interface will mean power consumption is lower so the spec is designed with power management and mobility in mind. Hmmmm... read all that again and think "FireWire".

The technical documents and press releases bang-on about the cable and you'd be forgiven if you thought that there are no more benefits to S-ATA other than just better airflow. Sure the cables are thinner, more flexible, simple to route and install and can be up to a metre long, but the cooling benefits of thinner cables are virtually non-existent in a standard PC case with standard gear such as a disk or two and a CD-ROM. Have you got sexy-coloured, rounded IDE cables which don't impede airflow? No? So



Looks unpleasantly like hookworm

where's the incentive? Apart from the uber-modder, no one worries enough about PC cooling to start wondering what sort of IDE cables are inside their machine.

Do we need a new standard?

Here's what I think: the ATA interface means very little to overall hard disk performance, where the disk itself is usually the limiting factor. The key, of course, is for hard disk manufacturers to start making faster products. I admit to going a bit over the top but I currently have 14 parallel ATA devices installed that could potentially be replaced by S-ATA. I don't imagine I'm totally alone in this respect, as disks, DVDs and CD-RWs are among the most popular upgrades for home and business users alike. The S-ATA chipsets I've seen support only one independent channel and connector, which according to the specification, means only two S-ATA devices can be connected at once (excluding RAID arrays). Although I have hopes for S-ATA, I don't expect that vendors will integrate a half-dozen connectors on many of their designs, or that I'll fork over the ready for a handful of S-ATA controller cards. The prospect of adding two or three host cards to implement S-ATA isn't my idea of innovation.

Part of the S-ATA problem is probably Intel. For some reason, they've concentrated on USB. Part of the problem is probably Apple because if PCs don't have 1394 interfaces, why should disk manufacturers build 1394 into disk drives? If disk drives don't have 1394, why should system designers build it into PCs? Of course, S-ATA may have the same problem, but it may be less pronounced. The concepts behind S-ATA are quite sound. The problem is that IEEE-1394 (also known as FireWire or iLink) already accomplishes all that S-ATA does, and much more. The benefits, already available, are too many to list here, suffice to say that 1394 is available NOW, is already built into some PCs and uses thin cables. The choice is yours, be informed, but give me FireWire any day.

THE WAR IS FAR FROM OVER

'This has got 'Game of the month' written
all over it' PC Gameplay 8/2002

'One of the most compulsive, not to
mention beautiful, real time strategy
games of recent times' Gamespot 6/2002

'A more realistic and satisfying WWII
strategy experience that will delight
the loyal following and introduce
SS to a whole new audience'

PC Format 8/2002

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WWW.SUDDENSTRIKE2.COM

The war continues with a vengeance. And in Sudden Strike II, there is even more action thanks to the realistic battles and extended controllability. The world is just one huge battlefield - in the air, on land, and now even at sea.

Anyone who plays Sudden Strike II will soon know what it's all about: survival!



* This advertisement is in no way intended to glorify the atrocities of the Second World War or to make them appear harmless. We plead that history is dealt with responsibly and would like to point out that this is merely a tactical strategy game.

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FD TRINITRON MONITOR!

TOTAL PRIZE VALUE

\$1500

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New Compact, Low Rise Two Tone Cabinet
Southern Hemisphere Picture Tube
Powered USB Hub in side Panel (1 Upstream, 4 Downstream)
Super Fine Pitch 0.24-0.25mm Aperture Grille
Compatible with Windows 95/98/2000/NT/Me and WinXP
27 Preset Resolutions for PC
4 Colour Adjustment Modes (Easy, Preset, Expert, sRGB)
3 Preset Picture Modes (Professional, Standard, Dynamic)



PREVIOUS WINNERS

Apologies to all for not announcing these lucky folks a little earlier!



PCPP#71 / 72

\$3500 PC from Peripherals Plus
Samuel Phillips, Woodside SA

PCPP#73 / 74

Xbox and MSI GeForce4 Ti4600
Erik Scharner, Tranmere SA



PCPP#75

Ultimate Upgrade Package from Techbuy
David Doherty, West Cambewarra NSW



To show off the capabilities of this monitor, we just had to give you one of the best looking games currently available to play on it. The Special Edition of Warcraft 3 is more than just a game though, it's a massive pack valued at more than \$150, containing a beautiful art book, a DVD of all the in-game cinematics, a signed manual, a soundtrack CD and of course the game itself. And it's all presented in a stylish leather box, kind of like one of those really expensive chess sets. It's not just stellar gaming, it's an heirloom! Give to your kids! Sure, they

probably won't be able to play it on their Dual Itanium Vs but surely there'll be a 560k WinXP emulator around by then.

Not only do you get a chance to win these two great prizes, you also get Australia's favourite PC gaming magazine delivered direct to your door every month. Never miss an issue! Complete your collection! Use the massive pile of mags to barricade your door when the revolution comes! Not only will you be safe from the Thought Police, you'll also have heaps of great reading! What are you waiting for? The guns are getting closer! Subscribe now!



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If you're an existing subscriber and want to upgrade your CD PowerPlay subscription to DVD PowerPlay, the cost will be \$1.30 per remaining issue. Just call on the subs number below to secure your upgrade. New subscribers, make sure you specify DVD in the form below.



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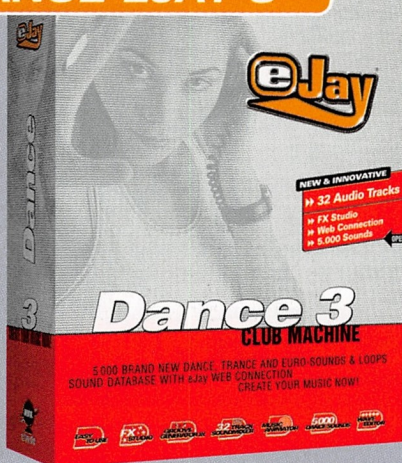
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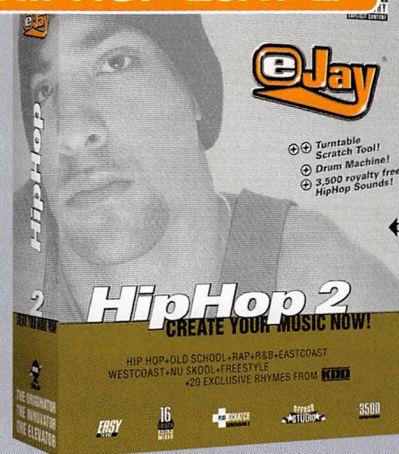
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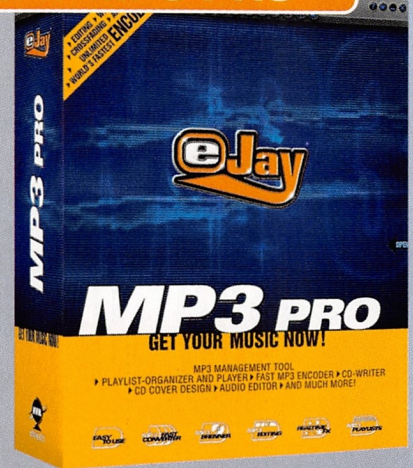
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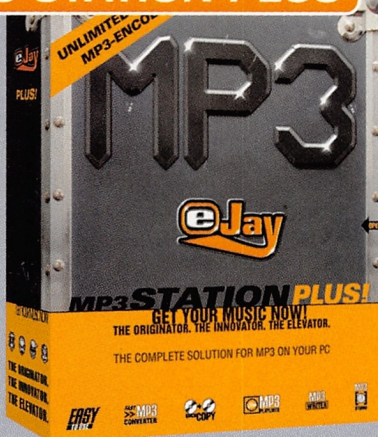
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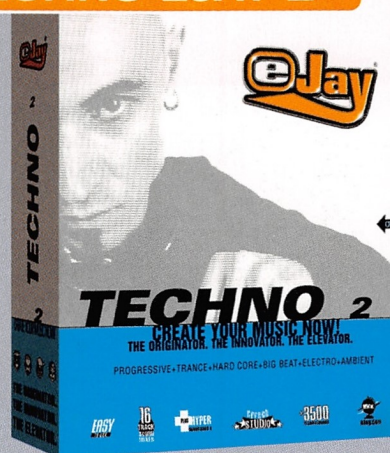
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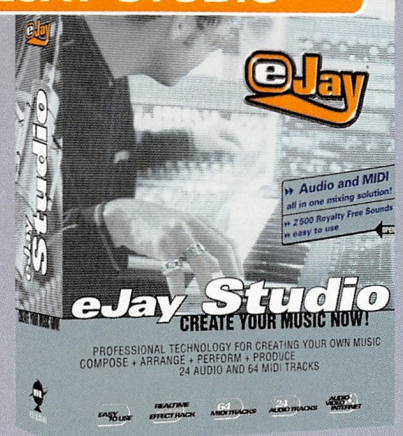
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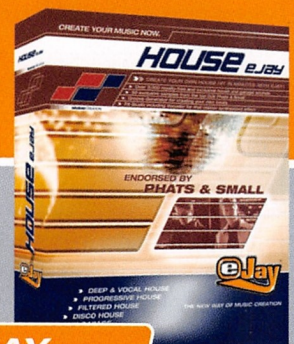


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IN PREVIEW

GAMES

They gave us the code, we give you the lowdown

Well hello there. After a long absence I'm back at last, and in a pretty snazzy spot as well! Big thanks to Daniel Wilks for getting the big promotion and freeing up some space for my own particular rants and raves where he used to hold sway!

Anyway, you'll notice we have a couple of big previews this month, in the form of Deus Ex 2 and Sim City 4 (the big feature immediately following the 'standard' previews). Now, these games might at first seem pretty different but to my mind they have a lot in common.

On the way back from E3 this year I was sitting up the back with all the other forgotten Freelancers who had to get there and back on our own steam, and we all agreed that gaming is still jammed in the late 90s when it comes to innovation. Everyone is sinking all their R&D cash into crazy new engines that require \$1000 videocards to take advantage of all their pixel shaded trickery (for more on this trickery, see Jere's feature on page 84) which most of us will never see because we're limping along on GeForce2 MXs *if we're lucky*. Even Everquest 2 seems more about its fabulous new engine, offering only a few tweaks to what has to be some of the most flawed gameplay currently obsessing the lonely and socially awkward.

Fortunately then we have Deus Ex 2 and Sim City 4 to look forward to. The latter introduces a 3D engine, increasing the level of detail in your metropolis and replacing many of the static text-based menus with more intuitive visual cues. This is graphical innovation for gameplay's sake, and what's more, it looks like we'll actually be able to play it on a realistic system.

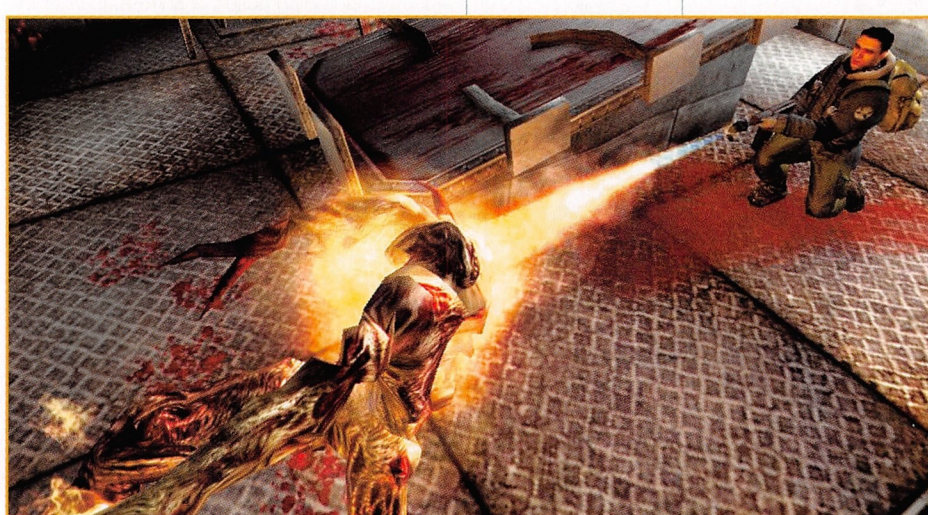
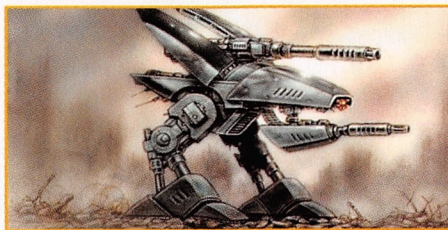
Deus Ex 2 on the other hand is charging right into the land of vertex and pixel shaded goodness, but unlike Doom 3, the graphics are for much more than just show. Increased hardware capability has been seized by the team at Ion Storm, and with it they've devised new and important gameplay roles for shadows, swinging lights, destructible light sources, multi-pass texturing and other effects that are only used as gimmicks in other games. It looks to be a game worth spending \$700 on a videocard for.

So once again Maxis and Ion Storm are setting the bar for gameplay innovation. But where are the hordes of eager pupils, taking on their example and making better games? Why are there so many Quake clones, and yet no Deus Ex clones?

We've previewed more than 150 games in the last 13 issues of PCPP, and one day I look forward to being able to say all the games I previewed in a year actually turned out to be worth playing, and not just pretty.

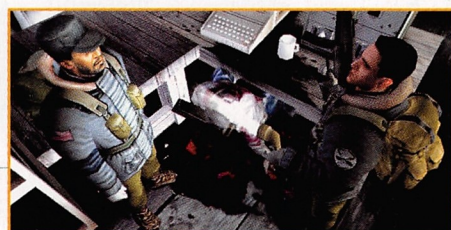
Until next month!

Justin Hoffman
letters@pcpowerplay.com.au



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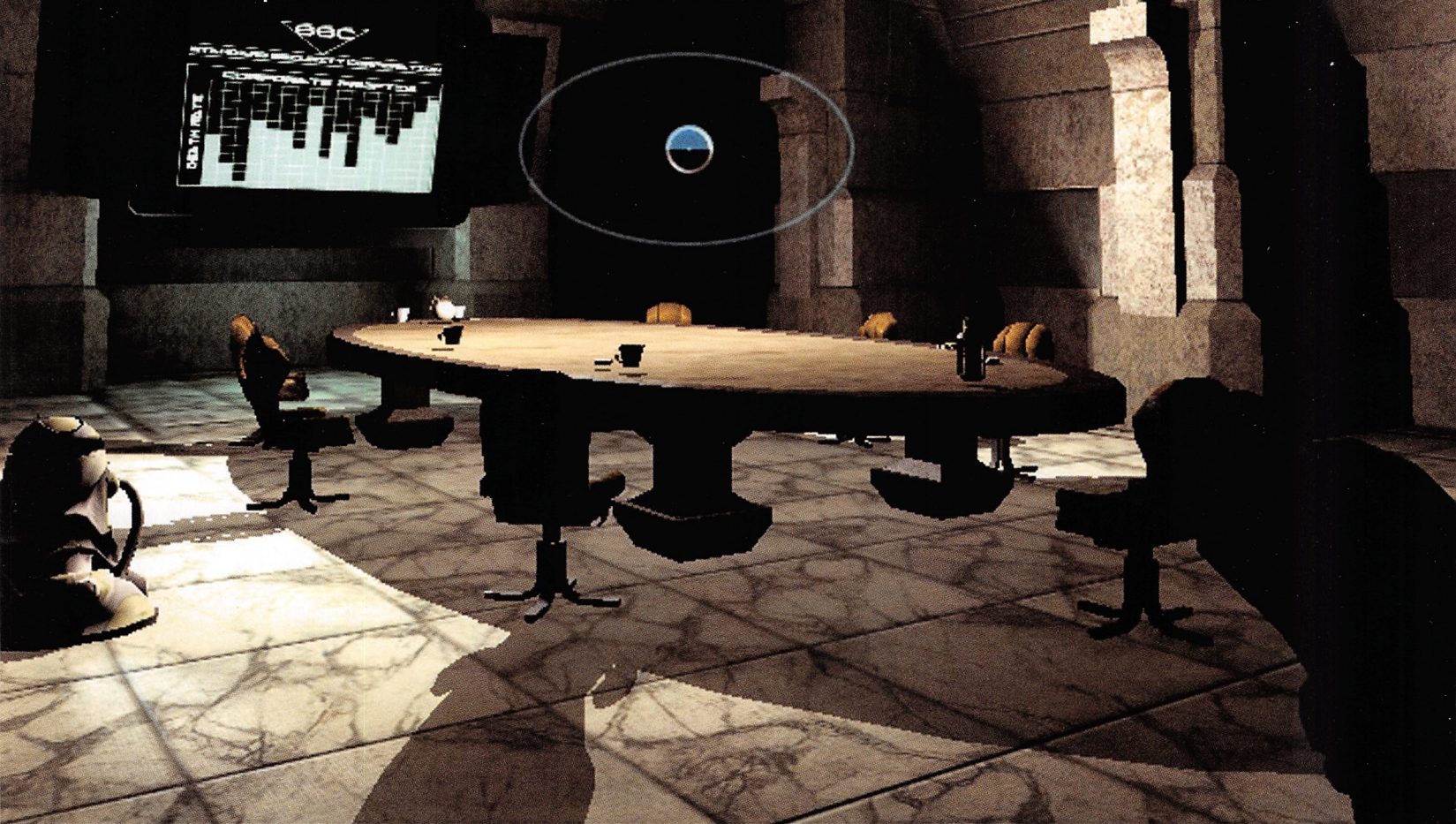
42 The Thing



Deus Ex 2

The Invisible War

■ **Developer:** Ion Storm Austin ■ **Publisher:** Eidos ■ **Distributor:** GameNation ■ **Available:** November



Below, the new costumes for All Saints Uncut



Rader game of the year in 2001, first place in the PCPP Top 100 for 2000 and 2001, Deus Ex managed to combine the adrenalin pumping action of an FPS, the depth of a roleplaying game, the narrative of a decent adventure and the tense gameplay of a Thief-style 'sneak em up'. It was one of those rare creations that truly had the ability to be all things to all people (well to be truthful there wasn't a decent soccer game in there, but the mod makers are probably on it now). Anyway you'd be betting your kidneys on Ion Storm and Warren Spector getting together for an encore to their incredibly successful opus and now DX2 is well and truly in development.

Deus Ex 2: Invisible War was on show at this year's E3 and it was one of the shining lights for 3D action fans who want a little more than mere machine gun mayhem (not that there is anything wrong with that).

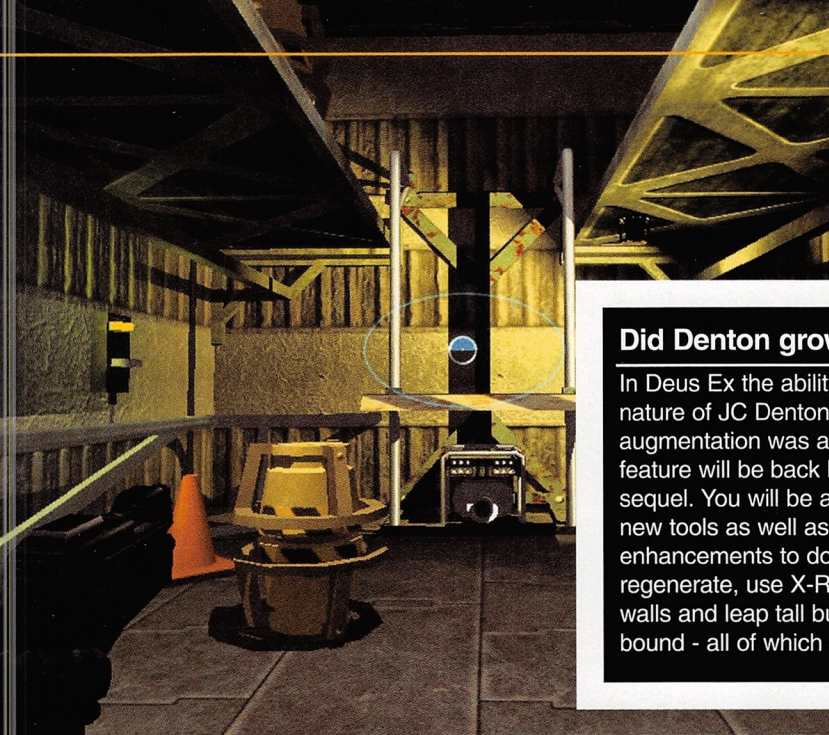
This time around AI will play a greater role in supporting scripted events. NPCs

encountered will have more complex AI profiles, remembering in more depth events that are relevant to their position in the game and how the player has affected them.

Physical conspiracy?

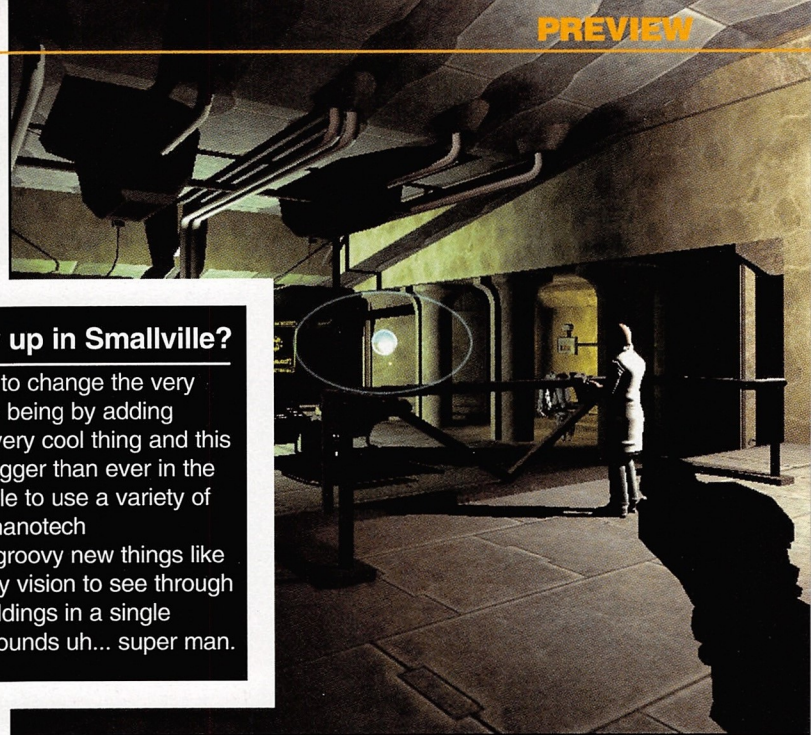
The physics engine is set to be nothing short of stunning. This is in part due to the fact that the development team has licensed the Havok middleware system, which takes care of realtime shadow and lighting effects, collision detection, and the implementation of deformable environments (including characters themselves). Certainly having seen the engine in full flight it looks like Havok is bringing good things to DX2 as the gameworld looks and feels a whole lot more solid and believable with sensational lighting and lots of environment objects which react to touch, bumps or of course being shot with high-calibre weapons.

The visuals are also promising, even if the dark locations on show were a little bleak.



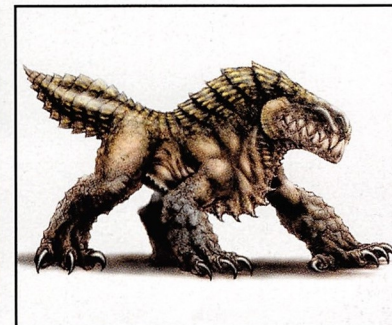
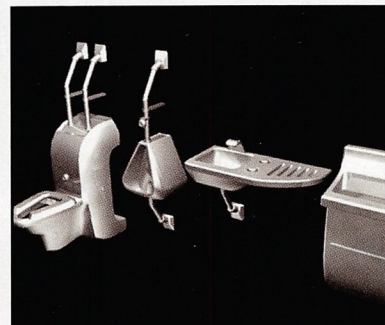
Did Denton grow up in Smallville?

In Deus Ex the ability to change the very nature of JC Denton's being by adding augmentation was a very cool thing and this feature will be back bigger than ever in the sequel. You will be able to use a variety of new tools as well as nanotech enhancements to do groovy new things like regenerate, use X-Ray vision to see through walls and leap tall buildings in a single bound - all of which sounds uh... super man.

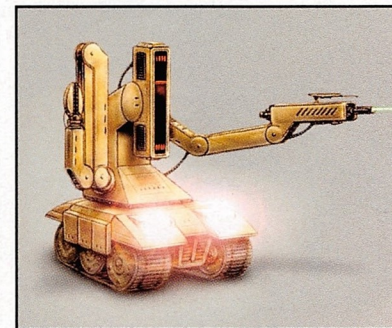


Even the garbage bins have cybernetic implants

Note the shadows cast by computer screens. Shoot the screen, no shadow



On the left, a very old bathroom render, on the right, a monstie



Warren Spector and his team of artists have looked at the issue of the admittedly average visuals in the original game and are keen to make sure this isn't seen as a chink in the armour in the sequel. As well as the impressive lighting effects much of what you see will benefit from visual techniques such as multi pass texturing, which sees objects being layered with different textures to create a more realistic effect. Motion capture has also been used for the first time with the aim being to better capture realistic movement (Or even motion, presumably - Ed).

Disco Stu!

Finally polygon counts for the characters and environments have also been upped considerably with facial skeletal structures and even subtle touches such as eyebrows and eyes. This should make for characters who are better at conveying and evoking emotional responses. Lip-synched audio

will also be implemented.

As an example we were shown a dark corridor with a lamp hanging from the ceiling. There were lots of shadows all over the place from the many pipes and other bits of industrial machinery strewn about. This was impressive to look at, but what really blew us away was how the shadows were accurately recalculated in real time once the lamp was set swinging by a few shots.

This sort of thing opens up some interesting design possibilities as light sources could be used in puzzles where it's necessary to illuminate certain objects to find them, or use shadows to conceal yourself in sticky situations, just by moving the lights about a bit. Kicking lamps over to help hide or using lights in other creative ways should add tactical depth, and the game engine handles the visuals flawlessly.

It comes as no surprise that sound will also be handled with the same level of detail. While wandering about the game world you will be



Are the templars back? Who can say...



Character models are now much more detailed, with clothes, facial expressions and nervous tics



heard by guards and they will look to triangulate their movement so that they close in on a sound source by calculating what they hear from different locations.

This sort of stuff has impressed us in the past with games such as *Thief*, but *Deus Ex 2* promises to take it to a new level, so beware of eavesdroppers! Sound will also be deadened by objects of varying density so you might want to be careful about the noises you make because sound will travel well in large cavernous areas, but will be realistically muffled when hidden behind large steel doors or other deadening objects. Listening at a door for the sounds of potential enemies wandering about might be a good idea, but you also might not be able to hear sound coming from certain rooms, as they will be muffled appropriately.

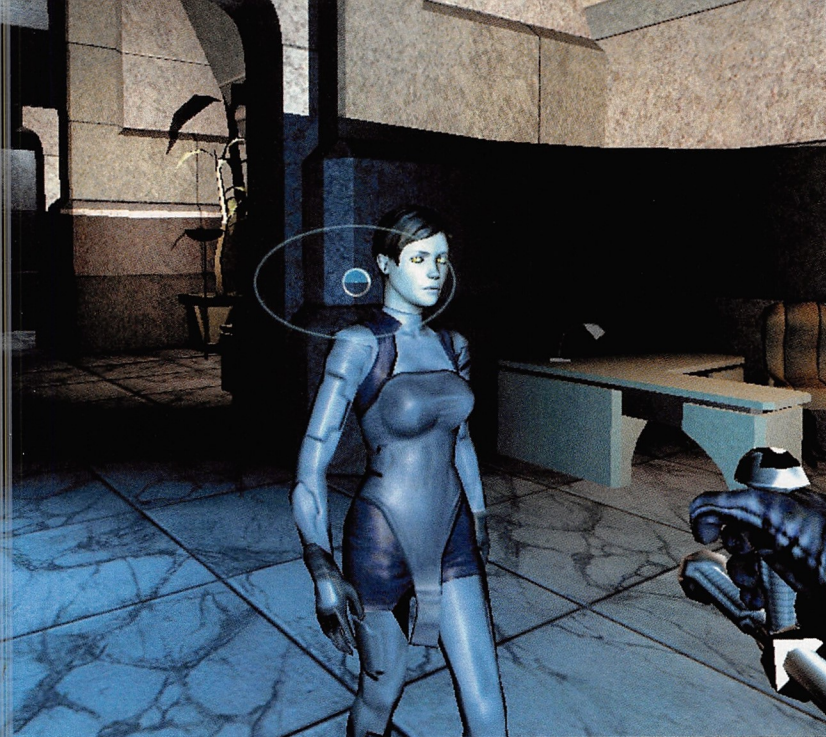
So as you can see from a technical perspective *Deus Ex 2* is going to be almost as pumped up technologically as the cybernetically enhanced agents you will control

in the game. Which rather nicely brings us to the issue of the narrative.

Me and my clones

The game will be set approximately two decades after the original. JC Denton has gone missing and UNATCO have commissioned four agents, cloned using Denton's DNA to find him. You get to play as these four agents, one of whom is a woman. This is something which we think pushes the technical limitations of science when it comes to cloning, but hey the game is in the future so perhaps cloning women from blokes isn't that hard. Anyway you will be given access to new augmentation abilities and be able to develop new skills while trying to track down Denton.

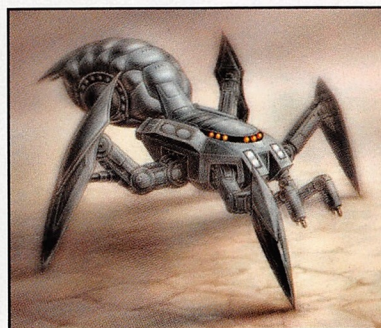
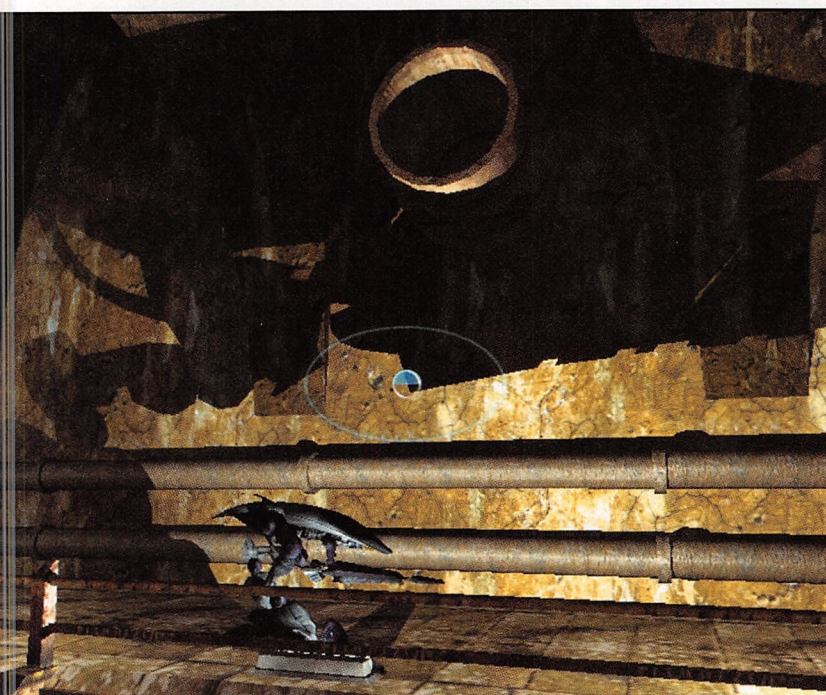
The game will still follow the multiple narrative approach which endeared it to so many of us the first time around and there may be as many as five unique endings on offer. In Warren Spector's eyes the plot will explore issues of



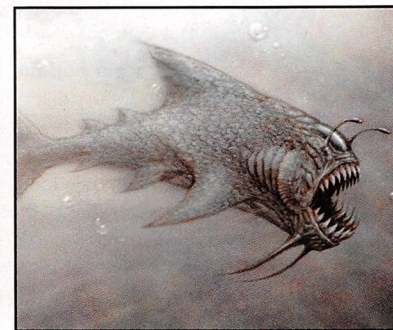
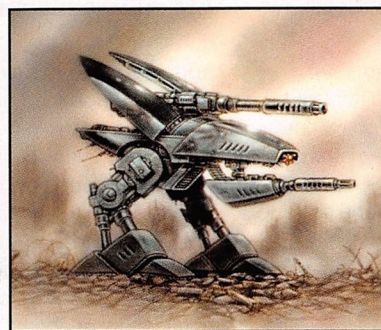
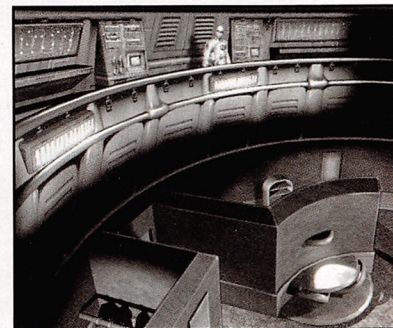
Her breasts bounce independently in 20,000 polygon splendour!



The ubiquitous sewers of the original will make a welcome comeback



A spiderbots, for me they made the game



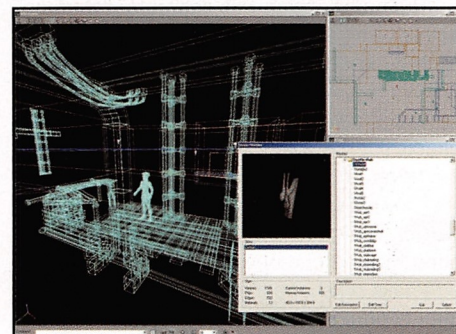
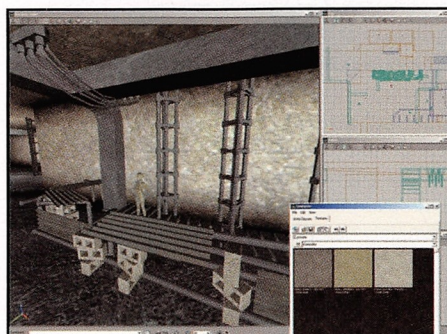
human development looking at what happens to society when man and machine meld.

Many of the characters from the original also return with favourites like Tracer Tong likely to play a bigger role. The geopolitical landscape has also changed in this sequel with the Big Brother corporate power base ruptured by the chaos that followed the uncovering of the conspiracy in the original game. In the sequel the world is more complex, with many different factions out to seize power and lots of moral choices and alliances will be open to the player.

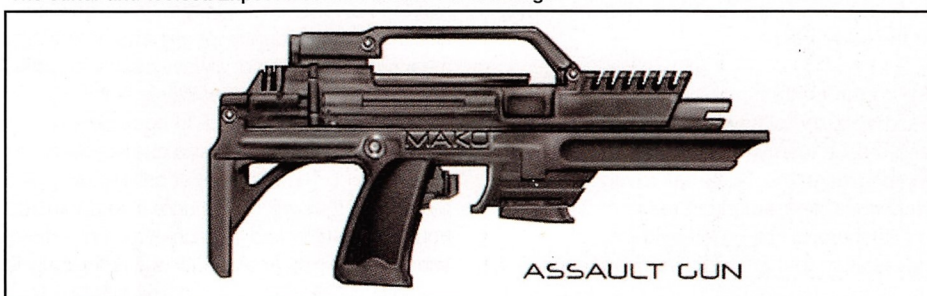
Non-violent gameplay will also play more of a role with moral choices involving non-violent solutions being something that Warren Spector is investigating in more detail.

All of this serves as a good omen for the sequel to one of the most synapse snapping PC games ever devised. The old axiom of Trust No One will be back in November, but can we trust ourselves to wait that long?

Steve Polak



The editor and toolset. Expect a serious amount of moddage



ASSAULT GUN

The Thing

Developer: Computer Artworks ■ Publisher: Vivendi ■ Distributor: Vivendi ■ Available: Christmas



Damned rat squirrels



Now who is going to clean up the mess in here?



Wait... I hear Celine Dion! Run! THE HORROR!



What the hell kind of dog IS that?



Your sausages are done!

One of the most popular and suspenseful storytelling traditions to be exploited in a videogame is that of the horror movie. There have been many games which have tried (sometimes successfully) to immerse the player in the terrific and exciting world of a horror fiction and now it looks like one of the true greats of modern cinema, *The Thing*, is going to get the interactive treatment as well.

The game, which was shown to attendees at this year's E3, will be based more on the 1981 John Carpenter remake than the 1951 original film, which was in black and white and used some dodgy makeup and special effects (Unlike John Carpenter films, which are never dodgy or... never mind - Ed).

The decision to go with the more current version is a good one as the more recent effort marked one of the few instances where a remake outshone the original movie. Also the Carpenter treatment delivers more scope for varied and interesting game play because *The Thing* is a more dynamic entity in the latter film.

Sin in the chilly bin

Essentially the player will be leading a search and rescue team sent to the harsh polar region where *The Thing* has ravaged Norwegian and American research bases. On arrival there will be much evidence of devastation, but answers won't be readily

apparent. You will have to piece together what has happened as well as track and hopefully neutralize the threat which could cause untold loss of life should it reach population centres in warmer climates.

The Thing will have something in common with 'survival horror' console mainstays such as like *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*. It will use a 3rd person view and will see the player fighting lots of abominations of nature in confined and isolated spaces.

However the game designers are also keen on injecting new challenges and elements into gameplay. The main way this will be implemented is by focusing on squad-based action where it will be necessary to control several individuals and direct them intelligently in an effort to overcome a host of puzzles and ultimately defeat the alien menace.

The Ghost of John Carpenter

This becomes more intriguing when you remember that *The Thing* from the 1981 movie has the power to undergo a metamorphosis and assume the identity of any character. This means that you will not always clearly be able to determine friend or foe. Worse still, members of your party could become befouled by the creature and attack you at any moment. The rest of your crew know this too and so they will be acting a little paranoid from time to time and will sometimes question your orders or do irrational things, especially if

they suspect you are the alien creature in disguise. This could be quite cool and coupled with the claustrophobic atmosphere of the polar bases should make for a tension evoking adventure.

It will be possible to leave the confines of the research stations explored during the game. However because of the extreme climate it will not be possible to do so for long, keeping the player mashed in with individuals who may have come under *The Thing*'s control. The fact that the menace can also shape-shift into any number of evil incarnations will also give Computer Artworks lots of scope to come up with some particularly vile and varied monsters to blast with a variety of weaponry.

Shoot it in the brain

Speaking of guns, there will be standard bullet-based weapons, which will be useful against some opponents, however to deal with the more serious perversions of nature you will need to find and properly use flamethrowers and other heavier ordnance.

The Thing looks like being one of the most promising horror inspired adventures in the pipeline for some time. Expect it in time for the Season of Goodwill. By which we me Christmas. Because nothing says Peace On Earth like an alien monstrosity that eats Rottweilers.

Steve Polak



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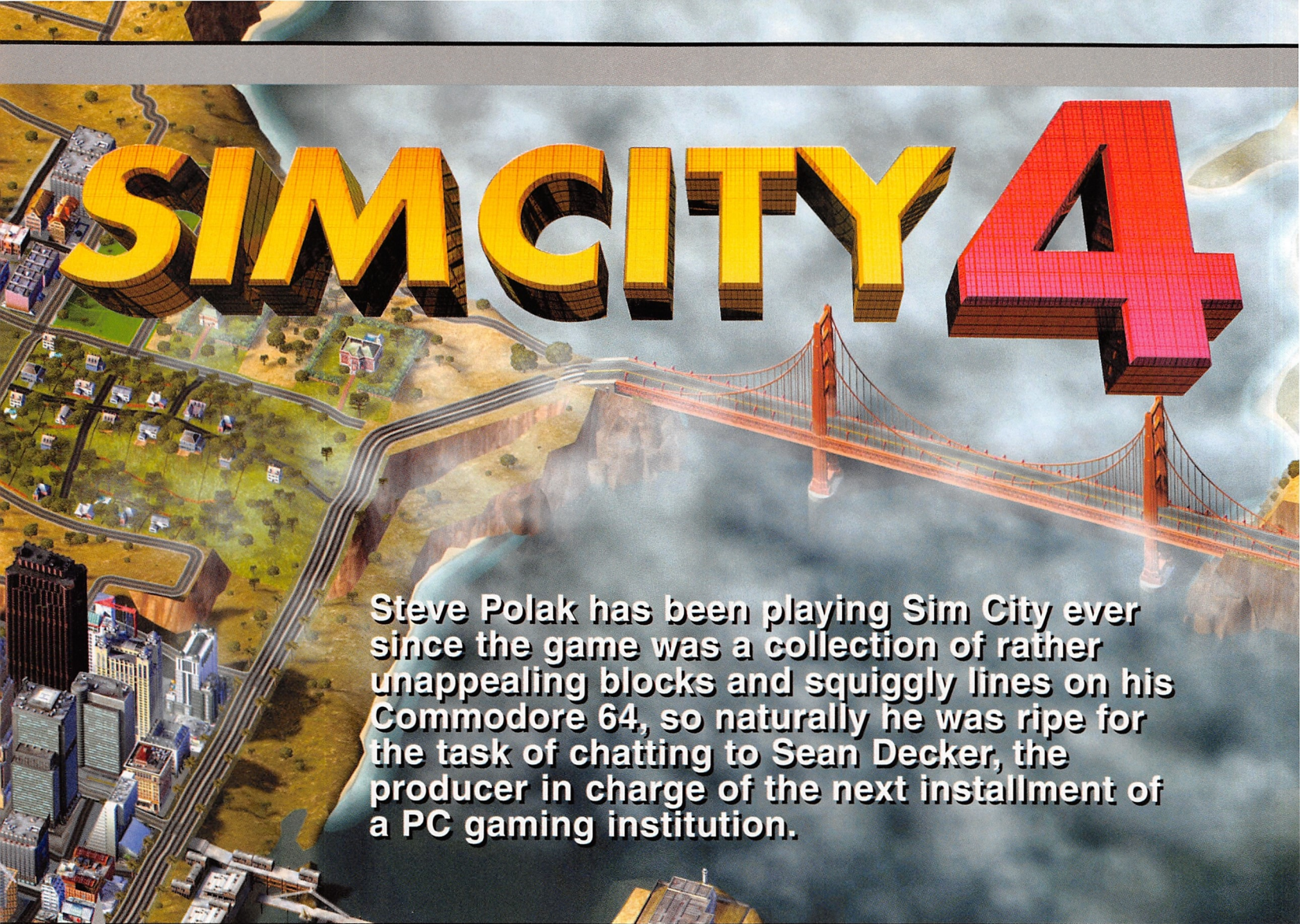
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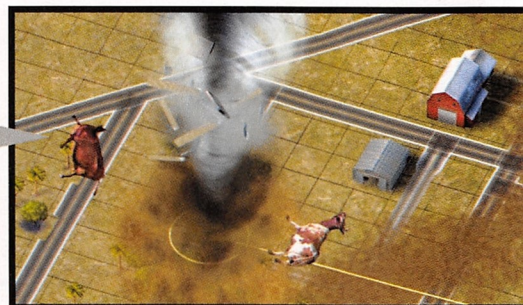
Steve Polak has been playing Sim City ever since the game was a collection of rather unappealing blocks and squiggly lines on his Commodore 64, so naturally he was ripe for the task of chatting to Sean Decker, the producer in charge of the next installment of a PC gaming institution.

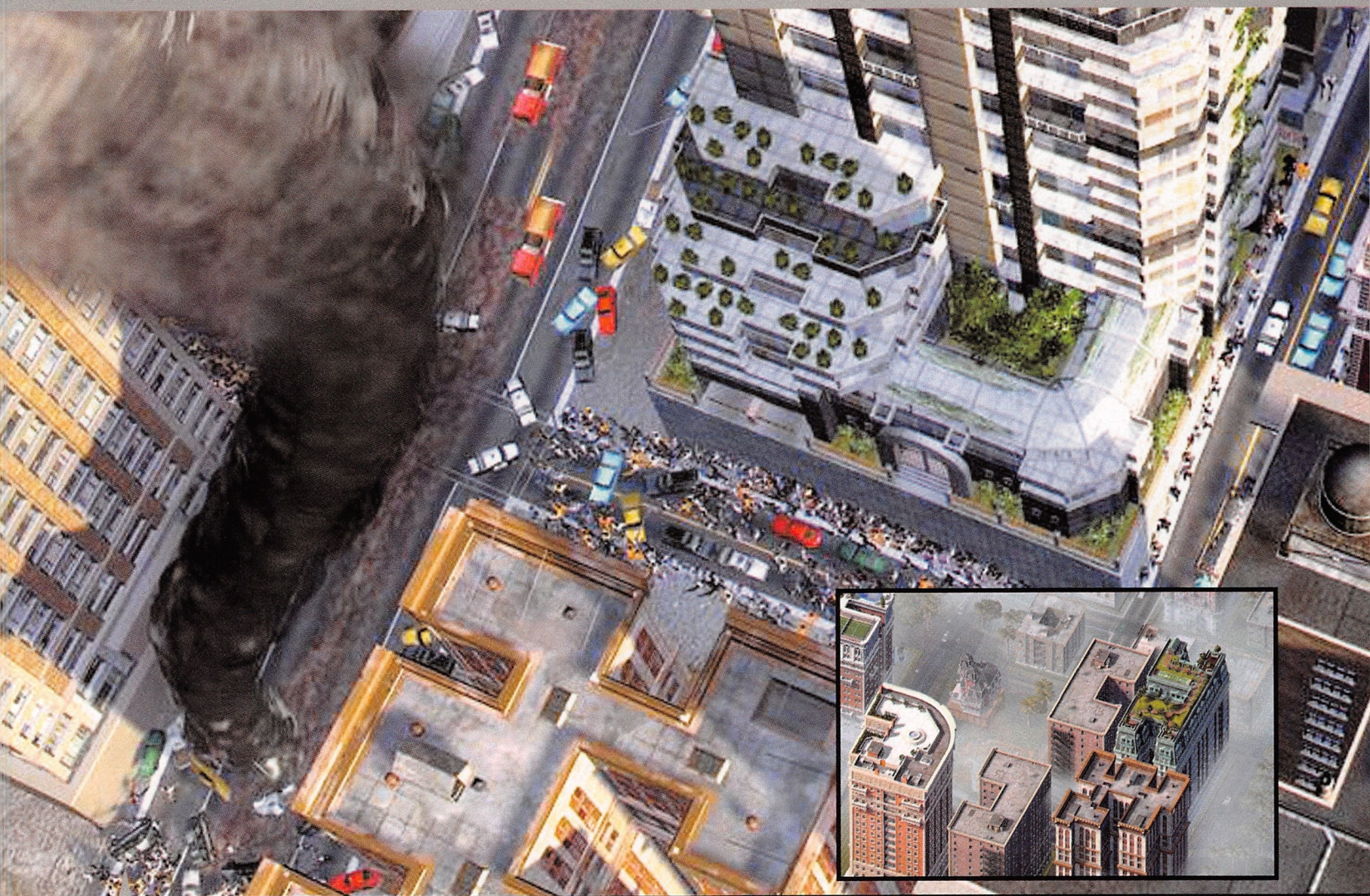
Look familiar? Then why not send down a tornado and blast it beyond all recognition?



Here's one I prepared earlier. Note the cows, and their subsequent trajectory

Fire bad!





Hours of painstaking city building swept away in an instant. This is what Sim City is REALLY about

PCPP: How long have you been working for Maxis?

SEAN: About a year now, having worked for SSI and on games like Command & Conquer Renegade.

PCPP: When was the first time you played a sims game? What were your initial impressions?

SEAN: The first game in the series I played was the original Sim City for the Mac, and then I never really picked up any of the other titles, as I sort of lost track of them for a while.

PCPP: Why do you think the series has been so hugely successful?

SEAN: When Will Wright started making Sim City it started out as an editor for the classic action game Raid Over Bungling Bay. He found that the editor was more fun than the arcade game as people wanted to just make things, like digital Lego. It really surprised him as it was so compelling. This editor let your

imagination run wild and Will thought there might be a game in it, and as you know his hunch wasn't too off base.

PCPP: Yeah you're not wrong!

SEAN: The game appealed to people who had perhaps as children enjoyed building things with toys like Meccano and on another level the game appealed to people on a more personal note. Everyone lived somewhere and most of us near a city so it was fun to feel you had control over such a huge environment. You could make a community and relate to all of the issues that concerned the community. Anyone could get something out of the game as the game was simply about living in the modern world.

PCPP: We have heard the game isn't being developed as a 3D title and will still again use the isometric viewpoint for play. Is this true and what is the reasoning behind your approach?

SEAN: We have used 3D

objects, but felt that providing all of the fully functional 3D camera options would cost too much in terms of a performance hit, so we went for a more traditional approach. We have added a new level of zoom too so you can see things more closely. The game is still 3D though, you just can't fly about in it, but by keeping things this way we felt we could do more with the graphics delivering a lot of detail while still making the game playable for most people. Having the people, the

cars, the vehicles moving within the world in a full 3D style game would have been too costly in processing power.

PCPP: What are the key new developments you have in mind with the game engine?

SEAN: We have thought a lot about this and much has been done to make the game easier to play. First of all we have a designer working on the game called Jez Knight, who has a





Wildly varying terrain elevations now allow for some truly crazy-ar-se, Italian-style highway systems



Ferris wheels and petting zoos



The city that never sleeps

Masters degree in urban planning. He sat down and looked at the game to find elements which could be added or improved to make the game more fun. We also looked to redo the simulation, improve the graphics and make the game look a lot better to play. These are our core two strategies in remaking the game.

PCPP: What are the changes to the basic design you feel need to be made to improve such tried and test gameplay?

SEAN: We have looked to make the game feel more like a part of a real world. Your city should be (like the real world) linked to other cities in the country. You are able to make 64 cities which are connected together and they

interact and trade resources on a number of levels, so your city now doesn't feel like an isolated island of people. You now have regions and other cities which would logically deal with each other.

We also changed things on street level. For example if you took your fire department in the old game and put it in one location it didn't really change things for the city. The whole city was still covered. We changed this in the game so that individual buildings have an effect which is much more localised and so you will need to think about these issues rather than just putting down a huge department store sized fire department to handle all of your city's needs.

This applies to other buildings and services too. This applies to schools, garbage collection,

police and so on. It determines in part who is likely to move into your neighbourhood, as areas with greater crime, lower education or more pollution might attract people with less education and so your neighbourhood evolves based on the city planning decisions you make.

PCPP: The press release talks about providing more visible clues to give the player more of an understanding of how well or poorly they are doing in the game. How will that work specifically?

SEAN: What we are doing now is everything we have in the game has visual feedback. So for example if you take your fire department and you drain their budget, chances are some of the fireman are going to go on strike

and so you will get a visual cue as the little firemen will set up picket lines and so on, making it obvious in the game that there is a problem. We are trying to do this a lot so the player is not always having to read lots of text to find out what is happening.

If you see a neighbourhood you will see actual crime taking place on city streets, garbage flying down the streets and this will suggest obvious problems.

PCPP: You have put a lot of real world topography in the game. Tell us how that will work?

SEAN: We are not going to put all of the cities in the US in the game, but we have gone with this idea called 'Sim City USA', which will see the game ship with about ten regions, which are barren sites

Life cycle of the Common Urban Sub-Development Zone



Look out, the buggers are pupating!



where major cities have been built, so you can for example build a replica of San Francisco in the bay area from scratch. These areas are based on real world data and even better we have delivered the terrain tools to the player so they can make landmasses which suit them as well, so you can make the city you want to make. People will also be able to swap them on line.

So you can look online and you might find your region for your hometown has been thoughtfully made by another person and there it is, or you could do the work yourself too. So the game will deliver a lot of variety and the community will be able to take it where they want to.

PCPP: Disasters have always been fun in Sim City. What have you done in this area? How will the player control the catastrophes?

SEAN: The disasters are brilliant! There are man-made disasters and natural disasters. The natural disasters are more of a one shot deal, so you go into the 'god mode' and you call down an earthquake or a tornado and there it is in all of its fury. We have added more precision to this too, the randomness of these disasters in the previous game wasn't that thrilling, so now you can control when where and how the natural disaster strikes and this is a much more enjoyable, if you want to see it that way. Other natural disasters include the meteor, volcano and lightning strikes.

We have obviously enhanced the graphics with 3D and they look fantastic.

PCPP: What about the disasters that are caused by

human negligence?

SEAN: Man-made disasters are different. There are things like pollution and riots and they are a barometer of what you did wrong in the game as the mayor. There are also things like pipes breaking underground and this will create a sinkhole effect which will swallow your buildings over time. Toxic rain is another really challenging man made disaster. We also have firestorms too which are really hard to stop once they get going.

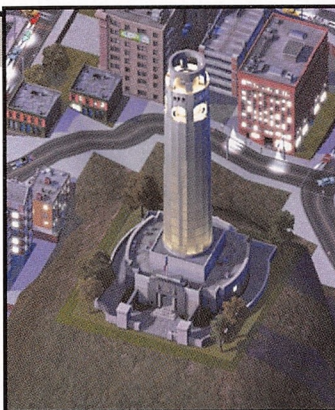
PCPP: What sorts of disasters will you be implementing? Did you feel you had to be careful about these in the wake of September 11?

SEAN: We tried to stay away from violent or controversial man made disasters like a jet crashing into a city or a train wreck as we felt these man made disasters weren't in the interests of tasteful gameplay.

PCPP: What sorts of scripted challenges or scenarios have you looked to implement in the game to augment the free building mode?

SEAN: We haven't decided to go for a story-oriented approach as we feel the story for each city will be the evolving city and how it meets its needs. In Sim City 3000 we had specific missions, like going into Moscow and cleaning up all of the crime or pollution there in 5 years, but this wasn't really what most people wanted to do so we have taken that stuff out and let people determine the stories and challenges in the game themselves.

For example you can try and attract a major league football



Make it your way

In Sim City 4 the team wants to make the game as fun and personally appealing as possible. To do this Sean and his cohorts have looked to make the cities more customisable. You will already be able to name streets and buildings: Fordham Towers has a nice ring to it eh Ed? (Almost as nice as the Polak Unemployment Benefits Office - Ed), but the team are looking to take this

further so that perhaps you will be able to use an art tool to create billboards which will be lit up using neon signs or using a photoshop-style approach. This originally was something the team thought about when they dealt with the issue of corporate signage.

From some quarters there was interest in using real world corporate signage in the game. Thankfully the bugbear of big business sponsorship was slain for a number of reasons. For a start there are cultural differences to take into account. Some corporate signage would simply look wrong or not communicate anything to people in some parts of the world. It was also seen as something which might annoy gamers, having in-game advertising forced on them. Naturally being a resourceful lot we would have conjured up the mother of all tornados and trashed every Starbucks, K-Mart and McDonalds we saw, and so the team realised this might not be the way to go.

However it is very possible that you the player will be able to use whatever imagery suits your fancy to construct billboards, monuments and icons using whatever artwork you like. Imagine the possibilities! You could have Serious Sam or Duke Nukem lit up all over your town selling sunglasses or lighter fluid. Or how about a Lara Croft line of lingerie?



team to your town or try and build a strong industrial town like Detroit. Alternatively you might try and construct a casino city like Vegas, and so the challenges will be there, but you will shape them.

Also one type of town will have special challenges unique to it and it will be hard to make your city cover all bases, so the challenge will be there and cities will often be very different depending on the emphasis of the player.

Creating a small dirty average city will be easy, but making a

city into something special with a number of major features will be much more of a challenge and this is where we feel the story of the game will come from.

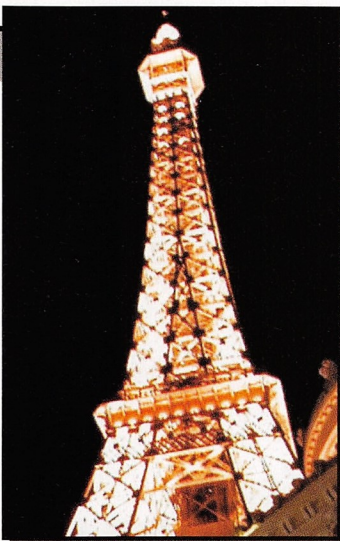
PCPP: The Sims will also be integrated into Sim City. This sounds like it would be a real challenge merging the broad focus macromanagement of city simulation with the narrow focus approach of The Sims. How have you gone about implementing this?

So much detail, so many little cars!



Plenty of variety ensures a unique town every time





Legal landmarks

Interestingly even legitimate landmarks like the Eiffel Tower and Nelson's Column haven't made it into the game as the legal wrangling to reproduce these landmarks has stalled. Apparently the image of the tower at night is legally protected and the legal boffins supporting the development team couldn't quite broker a deal. Similarly the owners of Nelson's copyrighted image weren't interested in having his face in the game so the column was axed and Sim City pigeons will have to find something less nautical to defecate on. Odd eh?

SEAN: We are really excited about this, as you will be able to grab your sim citizen and drop them in your city. You will be able to then see how they do, how they improve their life and get feedback from them. This will also personalise the game as you could create a sim citizen based on yourself and have them live in the city. They will tell you how happy they are with how you are doing your job as mayor and you will get a lot of specific feedback from them.

PCPP: Sounds like a challenge for the designers to merge a game which focuses on

individuals with something which sees you developing massive metropolises.

SEAN: It is actually working out well. People will be able to see what is going on in their city with the individual sim characters serving as a really accurate barometer for one region.

PCPP: How many sims will you be able to import into a city?

SEAN: Five, and these will be available from within the code of Sim City 4 or you will be able to use your characters from The Sims.

PCPP: Will you be able to move

your sims around to get different reports from different areas?

SEAN: They might move by themselves, but once you have put them in an area you cannot pick them up and move them yourself. The idea is we give you a complete picture for your sim, as they will have a place to live, a workplace they go to and you will be able to see how they get on outside their home. This will make the city itself more personal to the player.

PCPP: So you could theoretically have already introduced your five sims to the city and have a troubled area where you'd like a sim to live to give you more detailed feedback and you might be stuck, have you thought about this?

SEAN: Yes. You can blink them out of the neighbourhood and blink them back in the game, so they lose their identity in the game, but at least you will be able to deal with that situation. So while you can't impoverish your sim if they have struck it rich you can erase time for them and start them again in a poor neighbourhood.

PCPP: So it's sort of like Groundhog Day?

SEAN: Yes.

PCPP: So how will they give you feedback?

SEAN: Well this is funny because the more wealthy your people get, as they move into more affluent areas the more they will complain, so you won't always be doing the wisest thing catering to the concerns of the most vocal group.

If you are not doing a great job the more wealthy, who pay higher taxes, will be more quick to get on your case.

PCPP: Can you then take your sim citizens out of Sim City 4 and put them back in The Sims game?

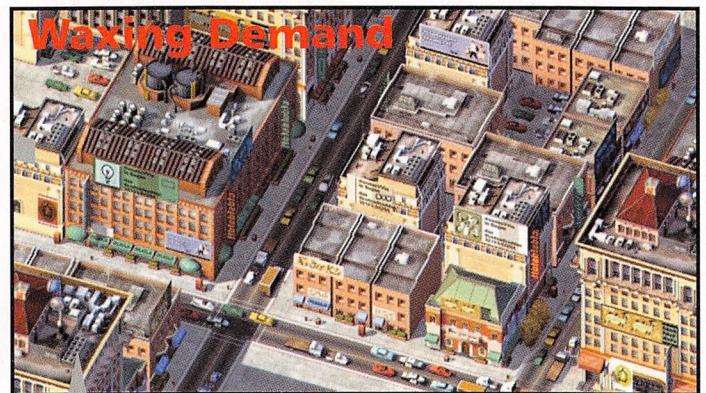
SEAN: We are looking at this and making other versions of our games so it might happen, but probably not in the current version of Sim City.

PCPP: The Sims has proved that playing with games and the internet doesn't have to be about instant action online play. That building a community around resources, downloads and developments can really work. How will Sim City 4 look to work with the online community?

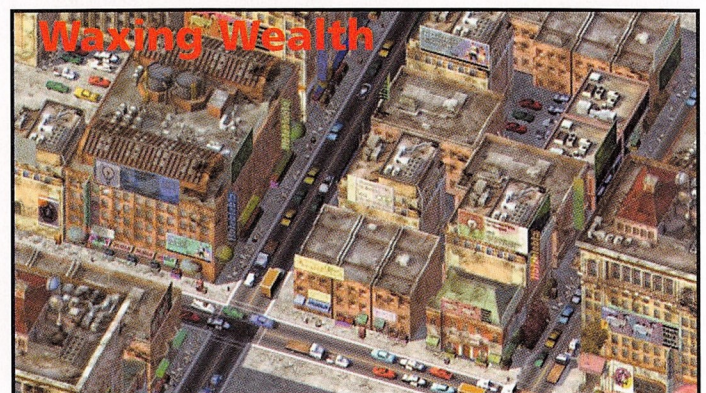
SEAN: We are looking at this closely and obviously getting people interested in creating cities based on their regions with the tools is a big part of this. Also making additional stuff available for download has



An example of things going from bad to worse



And now a turnip for the books. Note the traffic density





Tiny firemen! How cute!



FLW would be proud



Coastal areas give the opportunity for really cool maritime disasters, such as the QE2 refit

always worked in the past and we will be doing this a lot too. We understand the online element is important, and so will look into this very seriously. We have other ideas which we have been batting around, like who has the best Melbourne will be voted on by the community and have their details at the top of a download list. Contests might be fun.

Multiplayer is the other obvious major issue, and while we won't have it in Sim City 4, we are thinking hard about co-operative play as well as some competitive forms. Maxis is famous for doing expansion packs, so that might be something to look forward to.

PCPP: How many unique buildings/items will players be able to incorporate into their cities?

SEAN: There are around twice as many as in Sim City 3000. There were 400, so now you are looking at around 800. We have also gone with different architectural styles, 1890s red brick style, 1940's steel and concrete style and also a more modern glass and stucco style.

PCPP: What is the most appealing new building you have added?

SEAN: There are so many, but I personally like the cemetery because zombies coming out every once in a while which is funny. The thing Maxis does well is take serious subject matter and still makes sure there is fun

there too and you will really appreciate that in Sim City 4.

PCPP: Tell us about the weather effects you have added to the game. How will these change gameplay?

SEAN: All we have done is added weather for ambience. We originally found that making weather which affected the game was a real problem. For a start rain or snow looking good resulted in a big performance hit. It also caused trouble with the design as we had to make sure the environment changed properly. So we have scaled this down and there is night and day and a few clouds, but it isn't too involved. That said the night is spectacular.

PCPP: Lights and billboards?

SEAN: Indeed and although we have stayed away from real brand names, you will see signs that indicate that a major beverage maker has just set up a sign.

PCPP: You have automated some of the city development (for those that find laying roads tedious). What other changes have you made to the game to make it customisable to suit different gamers (those that want to fiddle with all of the details and those that don't)?

SEAN: We have tried to make it easier for someone to start the game. So a lot of the simple stuff like hooking up all of the pipes or roads can be automated to some extent. People can change this if

they like though.

PCPP: What do you think is the most exciting new functionality you have added to the game compared to the previous versions of Sim City?

SEAN: The way the game does change to suit the needs of the player, the casual gamer or the obsessive gamer. We wanted to make the game more accessible for new people to try it.

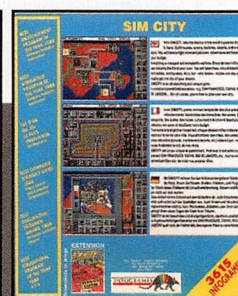
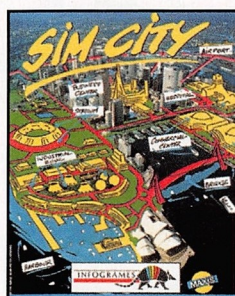
PCPP: Where do you see the

series going in the future?

SEAN: Looking at things like multiplayer action. Looking to add things like buildings (or places like universities or shopping malls) which can be added in segments and customised.

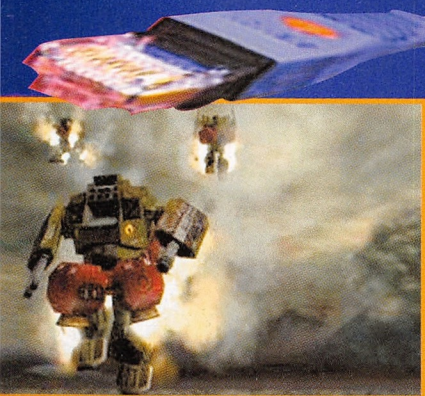
PCPP: Thanks Sean, we're looking forward to seeing what you and Maxis come up with not only in Sim City 4 but beyond.

SEAN: You know what, so am I!



It has always been with us

You might not think it easy but many of the early Sim City games worked just fine without a mouse. The game was released in 1989 on the Amiga, Spectrum, C64 and shortly after SNES and PC. These versions of the game didn't use a mouse, which somehow wasn't a problem at all. Indeed we remember playing the game sans mouse and still finding it incredibly compelling. The next major iteration was literally seven years ahead of its time. Sim City 2000 ran well using Windows, at a time when this was definitely not the norm and featured substantially improved visuals. In 1999 the Sim City we all know arrived with substantially improved play, a plethora of downloadable buildings and a massive level of community support online. You've come a long way baby.



ONLINE gaming

The rise of the Internet and fast broadband connections has allowed us as gamers to fulfil our ultimate desires - to compete or co-operate against players all over the world. Social gaming has matured dramatically over the years. It's just a shame that numerous gamers haven't. Grievers, Player Killers, beggars, whiners and con-artists all litter our virtual worlds secure in their anonymity - but it's not all bad. Hundreds of thousands of people all over the globe are gaming online and loving every minute of it, even to the point of addiction.

GLOSSARY

Add -
When an additional mob engages a group already fighting.

Buff -
Spells that temporarily enhance a character's stats.

Class -
A character's abilities or function. eg. Clerics are a class that heal.

Debuff -
A spell or effect that temporarily weakens your character.

Dupe -
An illegal copy of an item obtained while using an exploit or bug.

Exp -
Experience.

HP -
Hit points. 0 HP = death.

Lag -
A network pause that interrupts play.

Level -
The character's current level. Verb form: I have levelled.

Mana -
The amount of energy a player has that can be used to cast spells.

Med -
Meditate. A term used to describe the regeneration of mana.

Mob -
A mobile object. Refers to monsters and hostiles. (Origin: MUDS)

Newbie/NOOB/Noobie -
Someone that is new to the game and doesn't know much. Often used as an insult or to imply low level.

NPC -
Non Player Character

Nuke -
A spell that does a lot of damage quickly.

PK -
Player Killer.

Power Levelling -
When a higher level player uses high level spells or abilities to assist a low level character allowing them to level faster.

PvE -
Player versus environment.

PvP -
Player versus player.

Res -
Resurrection. A spell or skill to bring another player's corpse back to life.

Tank -
A melee class with a lot of HP.

Uber -
Powerful, of great value or skill.

Zone -
A predefined themed area.

MMORPG's - Modem compatible

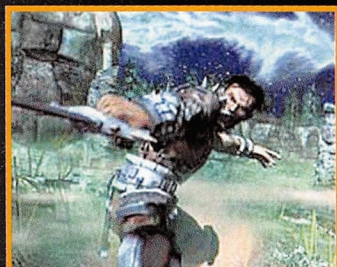
Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG) are a type of online game that use a persistent world. It's a virtual world installed on a server at the company's site which players use a client to connect to. The principle is simple. The server is where all the information for the world is kept

as well as a player's characters and for a reasonable monthly fee you rent your avatars from the company on a pay-to-play basis.

Currently all MMORPGs are role-playing games for one reason, lag. It's just not feasible to cram all the information required in a twitch game for thousands of players along the data pipes of the world. An MMORPG is

different in that the in-game character's abilities are reflected by a series of stats. These include combat, trade and language skills and are all automated by the server. Attack a mob or attempt to make an item and the server uses a series of mathematical algorithms to compute success or failure based on your character's skills. Due to

BEST WITH BROADBAND Twitch online gaming



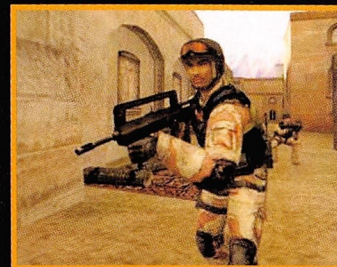
NWN

Although an RPG, NWN is not massively multiplayer. Using the same concept as the FPS crowd, the game allows for small groups of players to cooperate or PvP on player or ISP run servers. A complete conversion of the 3rd edition D&D ruleset, Bioware has made provisions for DM's and player made modules allowing for endless online play. In true D&D style, the DM has complete power and can hinder or help the players in his world.



RTCW

Offering gripping online gameplay, RTCW has you playing either the Axis or Allied soldiers of WWII. A team based game, players choose to be engineers, medics or soldiers and need to work together to complete CTF-like goals such as stealing a document. With limited downtime if you die you can wait for a medic to res you or if none are around respawn with the next wave of reinforcements, never longer than 2 minutes.



COUNTER STRIKE

Themed around terrorists versus anti-terrorists the realistic weapons, sound effects and suspenseful atmosphere make for exciting gameplay. It's the most popular FPS online game, which is rather surprising given that once dead you don't respawn. No, you get to stare at the screen until one side wins. Thankfully the missions are short and often end quickly but frankly it sucks if you're one of the first to die.

the small amounts of data sent from the server, modem users with as little as a 28.8 connection can play just as effectively as a broadband player.

MMORPGs are still quite new and as the genre finds its feet gamecos are tending to copy the overtly downtime ridden Everquest model. Considering that it takes a player 12 months (non power-levelled) in EQ to reach level 60 when playing for a minimum 3 hours a night there's a certain insanity in the insistence of massive effort for reward. An important question that no-one in the industry has dared to answer continuously pops up. How can MMORPGs remain a viable gaming genre if they require massive amounts of effort and time to succeed? It literally becomes a self defeating format as only the most popular online game will survive. Another downside is that after a player has invested thousands of hours in a character, the desire to join another game is repressed by burnout. Irrespective, MMORPGs will survive for one simple reason. It's a heck of a lot of fun to interact and play with people all over the world.

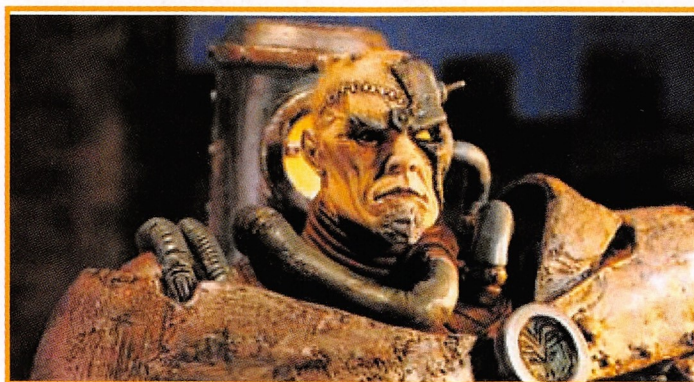
Ultima Online

UO for all its launch flaws, imbalances and anti-social players still showed the world that MMORPGs could not only be popular but profitable as well. There was always something interesting to do. You could be a tailor, miner, alchemist, blacksmith, bowyers, lumberjack or carpenter. The cooking skill was popular with Korean girls (often recognisable by their feather caps) who would surprise you with cakes, creating a brilliant role-playing ambiance.

At release UO was plagued with problems, mainly PKs. The inexperienced development team at EA allowed players to fight each other anywhere outside cities. This

amounted to a world that was dangerous to navigate and gangs of PKs patiently waited at bridges or main roads outside towns to mercilessly kill players and steal their items. It was called ganking and you were always outnumbered.

The reason for the rampant PK'ing was that EA underestimated the number of gamers who would flock to their online experiment. Subsequently there was a severe shortage of mobs to kill and PK's learnt that it was far more profitable to kill other players. The lack of a PvP flag meant gamers faced this constantly whether they liked it or not.



LINEAGE

Whatever happened to uber-RPG designer Richard Garriot?

Ever wondered whatever happened to uber-RPG designer Richard Garriot? He was snapped up by NCsoft of South Korea, a systems integration company that has made a radical emergence into the world of online gaming with the Ultima Online such as Lineage. Boasting a 47% market share, NCsoft claim to have the greatest number of concurrent users in the world with over four million active subscribers. Richard Garriot, Star Long and Jake Song (creator of Lineage) are recruiting from the world's top designers to create a second generation MMORPG focusing on fun, accessibility and rich content. Lineage can be downloaded for free and trialled for 30 days from www.lineage.com

With the growth and popularity of the Internet, developers have responded to the demand for multiplayer action by adding it as a function to their single player games. The methodology however is very different. Instead of centrally located servers supporting thousands of players, server software for the respective game can be downloaded. This allows ISPs and enthusiastic gamers to

setup their own server which others then connect to. Due to the high amount of traffic required they rarely support more than 64 players with the normal maximum being 32. Ping rules in these games and to be competitive a broadband connection is required. There's nothing stopping you from using a modem but the advantage a broadband has is so great that all the skill in the world is rarely

enough to defeat them and frustration ensues. These worlds are also never persistent and in the case of online FPS' such as Tribes 2 or Quake III the zone changes at the end of a preset time limit or when the first player/team reaches a certain score. The great thing about this is that you can sit down and play a match for just 30 minutes. There's no tedious group searching, once

logged in you're sent straight into battle to get on with the killage. Some common play themes involve deathmatch, a free for all where the player with the most kills wins and Capture the Flag (CTF) - a team oriented game where players pick a side and then attempt to steal the other team's flag and touch it to their own. Following are some descriptions of non MMORPG online games.



QUAKE 3 ARENA

id have always been at the forefront of FPS online development and Quake III represents their best effort. Fast furious online play was their goal and the single player component is nothing more than a training ground for online play. The premise is simple. Kill, kill and kill some more. With well balanced weapons and plentiful servers, QIII makes for great stress relief.



URBAN TERROR

A very successful and free QIII mod, UT is an ultra realistic squad based FPS similar, but superior to Counter Strike. Numerous game styles allow for Team deathmatch, CTF and Team Last Man Standing to name a few. Although not class based, players can equip different items to fulfil different roles. Equip a medkit and you can heal other players. Scopes allow for sniping and laser sights tighten the firing arc of automatic weapons.



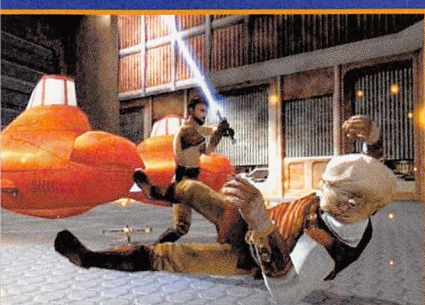
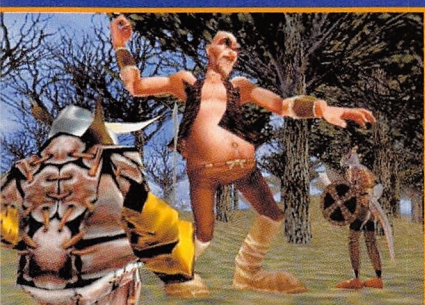
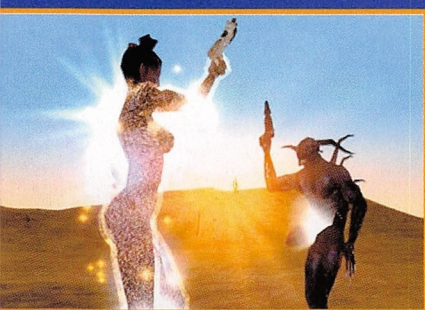
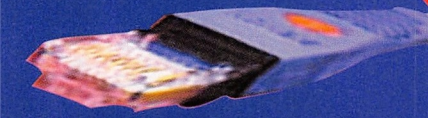
TRIBES 2

The best squad based action game on the Internet bar none. Tribes 2 is primarily played in CTF mode and features massive outdoor play areas and three different classes with different armour and weapons capabilities. There's also vehicles ranging from single man fighters to flying troop transports. Perfect gameplay, excellent balance and gorgeous graphics make this a must try.



WESTWOOD CHAT

The ability to play RTS games over the Internet has always appealed to gamers and since the days of Kali (PCPP#02) not even the complexity of DOSTCP, memory management and IPX tunnelling could dampen their desires. These days it's a lot easier now thanks to matching services such as Westwood Chat that allow for a common place to find players from around the world. Here you can start or join a game that when initiated becomes a peer to peer connection where the players all connect to the game creator. Currently all Westwood games from C&C to Red Alert 2 and Nox can be enjoyed online.



UO's endgame was unique in that players strived to collect vast sums of money in order to buy and furnish a house, tower, shop or castle. At this point the game became a virtual doll house. A fun but rather solitary experience, though without uber monsters to defeat or any reason to work with other players, a maxed character in UO has two choices - PvP or start again.

UO has matured and now features two identical lands for players to inhabit - one for PvP, one non-PVP. But in 5 years there's been no major upgrade to spells or skills. A promised expansion pack with 2 new classes due for release soon could inject renewed life into the game.

A big plus in this country is the local Australian UO server named Oceania. Modem/budget ISP users and rural gamers with pings too high to the US can enjoy at least one MMORPG.

Everquest

"You're in our world now". With that statement Verant lays down the rules for THEIR game. A game of many hour corpse runs, experience grinds, over inflated downtime, marathon will-sapping raids and uppity players flaunting their power-levelled items. A book could be written about the number of things that Everquest does wrong. Likewise, another book (equally large) could be written about what's right - and the user base is just as divided.

Everything in EQ happens lethargically; travelling, trade skills and particularly levelling. At first it's easy, then you notice the amount of experience needed increases exponentially until you're stuck for weeks with little progression - post level 30, it takes approximately 18-22 hours non power-levelled to advance.

Dying is equally painful. After level 10, if you're killed you return to your bind point naked, defenceless and at higher levels,



minus 4 hours worth of experience. It's possible to log off in worse shape than when you started.

Downtime is another big nuisance, because whether melee or caster, the regeneration of HP and MANA is painfully slow. From about level 15 onwards for every 60 second solo combat encounter you need to rest for 3 minutes. Verant's stance on this is that it's required to force people to group together.

Group combat is definitely EQ's strength. Downtime is significantly reduced because 6 people combining skills to fight is far more efficient. Although not all classes are satisfactorily balanced, the base classes such as Enchanter, Cleric, Monk/Warrior are extremely fun to play. Co-operation is the key; warriors tank the mob, clerics heal the warrior, enchanters mez the adds, wizards nuke, shamans debuff. To alleviate sameness different combat strategies are required in different zones.

The endgame is the best for any MMORPG - once you've endured the experience grind to get there. After level 46 you can enter high end zones called planes (among other uber dungeons) which require 30 - 40 organised people to defeat. These mobs are tough and offer real edge of seat gameplay.

Overall EQ is a great but hard game that has managed to capture an audience for well over 2 years, although it involves a

massive investment of time for success. Those interested can download a 30-day free trial from <http://rpgvault.ign.com/articles/364/364759p1.html>

Anarchy Online

Developers take note. Companies that release seriously buggy incomplete games will lose players and fall on their arse faster than you can say "this sucks". Thus begins AO's story. Another EQ clone, AO replaces wizards, warriors and clerics with sci-fi equivalents such as metaphysicists, soldiers and doctors. Graphically, AO is a masterpiece. The zones are beautifully rendered and the texture detail and quality on mobs is second to none. Gorgeous multicoloured storms obscure vision and really give you the sense of being on another world. Sprite-based grass sways and the two suns orbiting the planet are absolutely striking, producing incredible sunsets that light up the landscape with realistic colour. And that is about all the praise that can be given to AO.

Fundamentally, AO was a buggy piece of trash that the developers deliberately released early and unfinished in order to keep their bank manager happy. The arrogance of our Norwegian friends at Funcom was astounding. On the day of release despite the game server constantly crashing and the login server unable to handle the influx





of new players Funcom staff were mysteriously absent. Where were they? They were bigging it up with the Norwegian press at a launch party. It never really got better. Despite emergency patches that managed to stabilise the main client, AO was just too broken. Smart players capitalised on this and within a week had managed to dupe items and credits, exploit levels and equip upgrades they should not have been able to. At E3 Funcom were paying people to give out copies of the game - need I say more?

AO can be downloaded and trialled for 7 days from www.anarchy-online.com

Dark Age of Camelot

Best described as EQ done right, DAOC essentially has every class you would find in EQ but tweaked. One of the nicest aspects of DAOC is that a major effort has been made to reduce downtime. Everything is fast paced and every spell or skill for your character is attainable from a guild leader. DAOC also features only a few zones that are massive in size. What this means is that you can travel vast distances without pausing regularly for two minutes of "Loading. Please wait."

Combat in DAOC is so similar to EQ that transition for ex-EQ'ers is extremely easy. Melee classes (tanks) engage the mob to keep it away from fragile casters whilst clerics heal, wizards nuke and sorcerers mez. Actually, if you've

had your fill of EQ-style combat then DAOC is a chore. It's worth doing though for just one aspect of the high-end game, PvP.

Finally an MMORPG that does PvP really well. What makes it so good is that it can only happen in siege zones. These are areas where player armies take over castles containing relics that give bonuses to that realm. Merlin's staff is a relic that allows all casters of the conquering realm to do more damage. With 300 players simultaneously onscreen battling it out, DAOC redefines epic combat with an extremely well balanced combat engine. Low level players even have their own siege zones and the fun that can be had when evenly matched groups of about 30 players a side fight it out is awesome.

Battle.net

Another player matching service, BNET is the hub of activity for all Blizzard internet enabled games. With well over 100 BNET servers scattered around the globe, gamers can dungeon hack through Diablo II or indulge in RTS action with Starcraft or Warcraft III. To learn more we interviewed Bill Roper, Vice President of Blizzard North.

One of the big difficulties players face when playing RTS games online is the rush. Does Warcraft III address this?

Yes, we've slowed down the beginning of the game and done things that allow even the

beginning towns to handle the rush for example, the humans can call to arms which, for a short time turns all their peasants into low level footmen.

What are some of the new multiplayer features that have been added to Warcraft III?

We have anonymous matchmaking that sets filters for a one-on-one game, or choose certain maps and Battle.net automatically matches you with someone of similar rank. This gets around the problem of "win trading" where people played against themselves on a second account to increase their ladder ranking. We have better ladder ranking and improvements to connectivity. Also your game can be monitored by Battle.net to ensure there's no monkey business.

What sort of connection do players need to participate in a 12 player Warcraft III match?

In a 12 player game connection is less important than your system because there's a lot of polys' being pushed around. I've played a 12-player game on a 56k modem and it was just fine but you need a good ping to all players.

Blizzard has had a lot of problems with hackers, and exploiters ruining the online experience of battle.net - what's being done to make the service more secure?

We break hacks as soon as we can as well as anonymous monitoring. But with tens of thousands of hackers against our team of 6, it's hard. We try to anticipate what causes people to write hacks, what they're trying to gain and make it part of the design, like giving players the ability to choose fog of war to alleviate map hacks.

Pertinent to World of Warcraft and Diablo II, what is Blizzard's policy on the buying and selling of items on e-bay?

We don't have a specific policy - we've left that to be a matter of conscience for the community and we've never taken a stance either way. We want to see what other companies do.

Item duping has been a large problem for Blizzard, is anything being done to resolve this and to proof future games from this activity?

With everything we've learnt



MERIDIAN 59

The first commercial graphical MMORPG is back.

Released in September 1996 by the now defunct 3DO, Meridian 59 was one of the first commercial graphical online RPGs that took adventuring from the world of text based multi-user dungeons (MUDs) into the world of 3D. Using a proprietary graphics engine similar to DOOM, the world's architecture was rendered in 3D with sprite-based objects representing mobs and players. Shut down in August 2000, 3DO left a number of hardcore players to pine for what they considered, even by today's standards, to be one of the best PvP and social games around. Near Death Studios was formed by developers who loved the game so much they quit their jobs from prominent gamecos and borrowed funds in 2001 to purchase Meridian 59 from 3DO. M59 can be downloaded for a 30 day free trial from www.meridian59.neardeathstudios.com.

from Diablo II, we now have a much better way of tracking items and will immediately eliminate any dupes.

Are there any new plans to set up new battle.net servers here in Australia?

We had servers in Australia but closed them due to bandwidth issues. The amount of data that Battle.net servers use is very high, but the internet pipe coming out of Australia was very restricted. We often ran into problems where records would get out of sync among other weird things we couldn't program around. We may set up in Asia an Australian/English language only server.

Jere & Ruth Lawrence

Correct. Not every online game has been covered in this feature. That's because there's more out there than there are pages available. Other gripping online games include Asheron's Call (MMORPG), Jedi Knight II, Medal of Honour Allied Assault, Bridge Commander and Mechwarrior 4.

Panasonic

PCPP

READER SURVEY



What's better than settling down and opening your fresh new copy of PC PowerPlay each month? Why, settling down and opening your fresh new copy of PC PowerPlay, secure in the knowledge that YOU made it better. And the best way to help make PCPP better is to take this survey. A bunch of simple questions designed to find out a little bit about the kind of person you are and what we can offer you as a mag, and then a bunch of other questions designed to find out exactly how you read PCPP, which bits interest you and which bits send you off to the land of nod.

The calm knowledge of being part of something important not enough incentive to fill out the following three pages of questions? Alright then, how about if we offer one lucky survey-taker this awesome DVD Writer package from Panasonic? The package contains a drive and an excellent software bundle designed to help make home movie-making just that little bit simpler. Imagine having a DVD Writer. Imagine the mischief you could get up to with it.

We tell you what, we'll even pay the postage costs to get the survey results back, how would that be? Simply detach pages 55, 56 and 57 and send your completed survey to:

**PC PowerPlay Survey
Reply Paid 634
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016**

Remember, you could win this awesome DVD Writer from Panasonic!

PRIVACY DISCLAIMER

The results of this survey will be used to improve our magazine for you our valued readers. The personal details collected are for prize-drawing purposes only and will not be recorded with the survey results. The information gathered from this survey will be used to promote and develop PC PowerPlay, but will not be sold or passed on to any third party. Questions relating to software piracy will not be linked with your personal details. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact the Editor on anthonyf@next.com.au or 02 9699 0333

YOUR DETAILS

These details will be used for prize drawing purposes only

Name: _____
Address: _____

SECTION 1- BUYING HABITS

1.1 How often do you buy PCPP?

- ☐ a. This is my first ever issue
☐ b. I rarely buy it
☐ c. I buy an issue every now and then
☐ d. I occasionally miss an issue
☐ e. I never miss an issue
☐ f. I am a subscriber (Go to Question 1.7)

1.2 What most influences your decision to buy PCPP?

- ☐ a. The game shown on the cover of the magazine
☐ b. The games reviewed in the issue
☐ c. The main demo shown on the coverdisc
☐ d. Other demos on the coverdisc
☐ e. If a free game is offered on the coverdisc
☐ f. The feature articles in the issue
☐ g. Exclusive or Australian first reviews or previews
☐ h. Products reviewed in the hardware section
☐ i. I always buy the magazine no matter what
☐ j. Other reason (please specify) _____

1.3 Do you purchase the DVD version or the CD version of PCPP?

- ☐ a. Always DVD [Go to question 1.5]
☐ b. Always CD
☐ c. No preference, I don't use the coverdisc

1.4 If you don't buy the DVD version, why?

- ☐ a. \$11.95 is too expensive
☐ b. Newsagent doesn't stock it
☐ c. I don't have a DVD-ROM drive
☐ d. Extra content not of interest
☐ e. I don't use the coverdisc
☐ f. Other reason (please specify) _____

1.5 Is PCPP easy to spot on the newsagent or supermarket shelf?

- ☐ a. Yes [Go to question 1.7]
☐ b. No
☐ c. I have to ask for it at the counter

1.6 Why is PCPP hard to find on the shelf?

- ☐ a. The words 'PC PowerPlay' don't stand out
☐ b. The cover is too cluttered
☐ c. The cover image is hard to make out
☐ d. PCPP is always behind other magazines
☐ e. Other reason (please specify) _____

1.7 How often do you purchase the following PC magazines?

- a. Hyper
b. Atomic
c. PC Authority
d. PC User
e. APC
f. PC Gamer (UK)
g. PC Gamer (US)
h. PC Zone (UK)
i. PC Games Addict
j. Edge (UK)
k. Other magazine (please specify) _____

Always	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A SUBSCRIBER, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 1.12

1.8 Which of the following is the most important reason for your subscription?

- ☐ a. I get the magazine before the newsagents
☐ b. I get the magazine delivered to my door
☐ c. I save money on the cover price
☐ d. All are equally important

1.9 How many issues of PCPP did you buy before you decided to subscribe?

- ☐ a. 20+
☐ b. 10 - 20
☐ c. Fewer than 10
☐ d. Subscribed after my first issue!
☐ e. Was given a gift subscription

1.10 If you haven't upgraded your subscription to the DVD version, why?

- ☐ a. Too expensive
☐ b. I don't have a DVD-ROM drive
☐ c. Not interested in extra content

1.11 How would you rate customer service for subscribers?

- ☐ a. Good
☐ b. Adequate
☐ c. Bad

1.12 If you are not yet a subscriber, or your subscription is up for renewal, how much influence does the major subscriptions prize have on your decision to subscribe?

- ☐ a. No influence, I love PCPP for the magazine
☐ b. Some influence
☐ c. My mind is made up by how good the prize is

1.13 If the following prize types were offered, how likely would you be to subscribe or renew a subscription?

- a. A high-end PC system, valued at more than \$5000 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
b. A medium-end PC system, valued at \$1500 - \$2000 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
c. A standard PC monitor from a big-name brand such as Sony and Philips, valued at \$1500 - \$2000 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
d. An LCD Flat-panel display valued at \$1000 - \$4000 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
e. A high-end videocard such as a GeForce4 Ti4600 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
f. A set of PC 5.1 Surround Speakers valued at \$500 - \$1000 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
g. Non-PC related products related to a game being promoted on the subscriptions page, such as a night-vision scope for Ghost Recon. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
h. Signed clothing, artworks, games etc by developers and other gaming personalities ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
i. A holiday ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
j. A special activities prize, such as winning a test lap in a V8 Supercar ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
k. A special edition pack of a game, such as Warcraft III ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
l. A games pack of at least 10 games ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
m. Other (please specify) _____

1.14 Which prize model would influence your decision to subscribe more?

- ☐ a. One major prize winner, valued at \$2000 or more
☐ b. 5 - 10 minor prize winners, valued at \$100 - \$500

SECTION 2- READING HABITS

2.1 How much of PCPowerplay do you read?

- ☐ a. The whole thing, cover to cover
☐ b. Only the game reviews
☐ c. Only the hardware reviews
☐ d. Only news and previews
☐ e. Only the parts that interest me
☐ f. I read very little of the mag, I only use the coverdiscs

2.2 What do you do with PCPP once you've finished with it?

- ☐ a. Add it to my collection
☐ b. Throw it out
☐ c. Give it to a friend
☐ d. Lose it



2.3 Which parts of PCPP do you flip to first?

- ☐ a. I read each page in order
- ☐ b. First looks
- ☐ c. Spotlight
- ☐ d. Previews
- ☐ e. Features
- ☐ f. Game reviews
- ☐ g. Hardware reviews
- ☐ h. All the funny stuff

2.4 How long does it take you to read each issue of PCPP?

- ☐ a. I read it all in one sitting
- ☐ b. Less than a week
- ☐ c. Less than two weeks
- ☐ d. It lasts the whole month, just in time for a new issue!

SECTION 3 - SECTIONS OF THE MAGAZINE

3.1 Please rate each section of the magazine

- a. First Looks
- b. Spotlight
- c. Previews
- d. Features
- e. Game reviews
- f. Hardware features
- g. Hardware reviews
- h. Setup
- i. Oracle
- j. Mod Life
- k. Miscellaneous pieces such as Flashback, dr claw, Hack etc

Excellent	Good	Mediocre	Boring
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.2 Please rate the size of each section of the magazine

- a. First Looks
- b. Spotlight
- c. Previews
- d. Features
- e. Game reviews
- f. Hardware features
- g. Hardware reviews
- h. Setup
- i. Oracle
- j. Mod Life
- k. Miscellaneous pieces such as Flashback, dr claw, Hack etc

Make bigger	Keep the same	Make smaller	Lose it
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 Which of the following sections would you like to see added to the magazine

- a. Tutorials on game editors, map making tools etc
- b. A monthly interview with a gaming personality
- c. Gameplay tutorials for expert players, for games such as CS, Quake3, Warcraft 3 etc
- d. Reviews of non-gaming IT hardware such as PDAs, notebooks etc

Definitely	Don't Mind	Definitely Not
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

e. Reviews or non-gaming software such as web development, programming

Definitely	Don't Mind	Definitely Not
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

f. Reviews of home entertainment products such as TVs, DVD players

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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g. Reviews of consumer electronics and gadgets such as mobile phones

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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h. A small section on console gaming

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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i. More articles on the history of gaming, retro gaming and the games we used to play

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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j. DVD and movie reviews

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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k. Board game and comic reviews

3.4 What is your opinion of the 'spec' or physical appearance of the magazine? (You may tick more than one)

- ☐ a. It feels cheap and nasty and covers are too flimsy
- ☐ b. The pages are too large, the mag should be smaller
- ☐ c. It's just right the way it is

SECTION 4 - GAMES AND GAMING

4.1 Please rank the following genres in order of preference

- ☐ a. Firstperson Shooter (ie: Medal of Honour)
- ☐ b. Realtime Strategy (ie: Warcraft 3)
- ☐ c. Roleplaying Game (ie: Neverwinter Nights)
- ☐ d. Online roleplaying game (ie: Everquest)
- ☐ e. Online shooter (ie: Counter-Strike)
- ☐ f. Sports simulator (ie: FIFA 2002)
- ☐ g. Driving simulator (ie: Grand Prix 4)
- ☐ h. Flight simulator (ie: Microsoft Flight Simulator 2002)
- ☐ i. Adventure game (ie: The Longest Journey)
- ☐ j. Economic simulator (ie: Sim City)
- ☐ k. Strategy game (ie: Civilization 3)
- ☐ l. Arcade game (ie: Taz Wanted)
- ☐ m. Console conversion (ie: Metal Gear Solid)

4.2 How often do you purchase a new game? (Answers are CONFIDENTIAL)

- ☐ a. More than once a month
- ☐ b. Once a month
- ☐ c. Once every 3 months
- ☐ d. Once every 6 months
- ☐ e. Once a year
- ☐ f. Birthdays and Christmas
- ☐ g. I rely on gifts
- ☐ h. I mainly play pirated games

4.3 How many PC games do you own?

- ☐ a. Fewer than 10
- ☐ b. 10 - 20
- ☐ c. 20 - 50
- ☐ d. 50 - 100
- ☐ e. More than 100

4.4 What percentage of your games are pirated? (Answers are CONFIDENTIAL)

- ☐ a. Most of them
- ☐ b. Some of them
- ☐ c. Few of them
- ☐ d. I have no pirated games

4.5 What other gaming systems do you own or intend to buy?

- a. Game Boy
- b. Game Boy Colour
- c. Game Boy Advance
- d. Nintendo 64
- e. Nintendo Gamecube
- f. PlayStation
- g. PlayStation 2
- h. Xbox

Already own	Intend to buy	Won't buy
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION 5 - HARDWARE

5.1 What would be the approximate value of your current primary PC and associated peripherals?

- ☐ a. Less than \$1500
- ☐ b. \$1500 - \$2500
- ☐ c. \$2500 - \$5000
- ☐ d. More than \$5000

5.2 Would you consider building your own PC?

- ☐ a. Never
- ☐ b. Yes, If I knew how to do it
- ☐ c. I already build my PC

5.3 Do you have an interest in PC case modding (neons, extra fans etc)?

- ☐ a. Never heard of "case modding"
- ☐ b. No interest
- ☐ c. Interested if provided with tutorials
- ☐ d. Already a case modder

5.4 Do you upgrade part-by-part or just buy a whole new PC?

- ☐ a. Upgrade
- ☐ b. Replace whole PC [go to question 5.6]

5.5 How often do you upgrade your:

- a. CPU
- b. Motherboard
- c. Videocard
- d. Sound card
- e. RAM
- f. Speakers
- g. Monitor
- h. Hard Drive
- i. CD/DVD-ROM driver
- j. CD/DVD-Writer

6 months	12 months	18 months	never
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.6 Which of the following do you already own or intend to buy?

- a. Broadband Internet Connection
- b. CD Writer
- c. CRT Monitor
- d. Digital Camera
- e. DVD Writer
- f. DVD ROM
- g. External Hard Drive
- h. Game Controllers
- i. Inkjet Printer
- j. Laptop Computer
- k. Laser Printer
- l. LCD Monitor
- m. Mobile Phone
- n. MP3 Player
- o. Networking Products
- p. PC Speakers
- q. PDA / Pocket PC
- r. Projector
- s. Scanner
- t. Server
- u. Super Disk Drive
- v. Zip Drive

	Already own	Own & will upgrade	Intend to buy	Don't intend to buy
a. Broadband Internet Connection	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. CD Writer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. CRT Monitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Digital Camera	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. DVD Writer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. DVD ROM	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. External Hard Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Game Controllers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Inkjet Printer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Laptop Computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Laser Printer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. LCD Monitor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Mobile Phone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. MP3 Player	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. Networking Products	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. PC Speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. PDA / Pocket PC	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. Projector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. Scanner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. Server	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
u. Super Disk Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
v. Zip Drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5.7 Where would you be most likely to purchase these hardware products?

- ☐ a. Online retail
- ☐ b. Online auction
- ☐ c. General retail (department) stores
- ☐ d. Specialist computer retail stores
- ☐ e. Trade fair / swap meet

5.8 How often would you make a PC hardware related purchase?

- ☐ a. Monthly
- ☐ b. Every 3 months
- ☐ c. Every 6 months
- ☐ d. Every 12 months +

5.9 What is the current processor on your gaming machine?

- ☐ a. Pentium 2
- ☐ b. Pentium 3
- ☐ c. Celeron
- ☐ d. Pentium 4
- ☐ e. AMD Athlon
- ☐ f. AMD Duron

5.10 What is the current videocard on your gaming machine?

- ☐ a. No 3D accelerator
- ☐ b. 12MB Voodoo 2
- ☐ c. Voodoo3 / Voodoo4
- ☐ d. Voodoo5
- ☐ e. TNT
- ☐ g. TNT2
- ☐ h. ATI Radeon
- ☐ i. GeForce
- ☐ j. GeForce2
- ☐ k. GeForce3
- ☐ l. GeForce4
- ☐ m. Other (please specify)

5.11 How large is your hard drive capacity? (Include all drives)

- ☐ a. Less than 20GB
- ☐ b. 20-40GB
- ☐ c. 40-80Gb
- ☐ d. More than 80GB

5.12 How often do you use a CD-Writer?

- ☐ a. I don't own one
- ☐ b. Daily
- ☐ c. Occasionally
- ☐ d. I have one but I've only used it a couple of times

SECTION 6- INTERNET USAGE

6.1 What is your Internet connection at home?

- ☐ a. None
- ☐ b. 56K Modem
- ☐ c. ADSL
- ☐ d. Cable

6.2 What is your primary use for the internet?

- ☐ a. Research / Information
- ☐ b. Online gaming
- ☐ c. Entertainment
- ☐ d. Purchasing
- ☐ e. Email only
- ☐ f. Pornography!

6.3 Do you use the internet for online purchases? (tick all that apply)

- ☐ a. Groceries
- ☐ b. PC Software
- ☐ c. PC Hardware
- ☐ d. Clothing
- ☐ e. Music / DVDs
- ☐ f. Gifts / Flowers
- ☐ g. Other (please specify)

6.4 Do you play online games?

- ☐ a. No
- ☐ b. Would if I had a better connection
- ☐ c. Would if there were any games I liked
- ☐ d. I always play online
- ☐ e. I occasionally play online
- ☐ f. I rarely play online

6.5 Do you visit the PC PowerPlay Website?

- ☐ a. Once in the last month
- ☐ b. Twice in the last month
- ☐ c. Five times in the last month
- ☐ d. 10+ times in the last month
- ☐ e. I'm there every day!

SECTION 7- PERSONAL DETAILS

7.1 What is your age

- ☐ a. Younger than 14,
- ☐ b. 14-18
- ☐ c. 18-25
- ☐ d. 25-35
- ☐ e. 35-45
- ☐ f. 45+

7.2 What is your occupation:

- ☐ a. Student - High School
- ☐ b. Student - Tertiary
- ☐ c. Retail
- ☐ d. IT Manufacturing
- ☐ e. IT Retail
- ☐ f. IT Administration
- ☐ g. Sales / Marketing
- ☐ h. Senior Management
- ☐ i. Education
- ☐ j. Healthcare
- ☐ k. Finance
- ☐ l. Transport
- ☐ m. Construction
- ☐ n. Media
- ☐ o. Other (please specify)

7.3 What is your annual salary?

- ☐ a. Less than \$25K
- ☐ b. \$25K - \$35K
- ☐ c. \$35k - \$50K
- ☐ d. \$50K - \$70K
- ☐ e. \$70K - \$100K
- ☐ f. \$100K+

7.4 What additional activities are of interest to you?

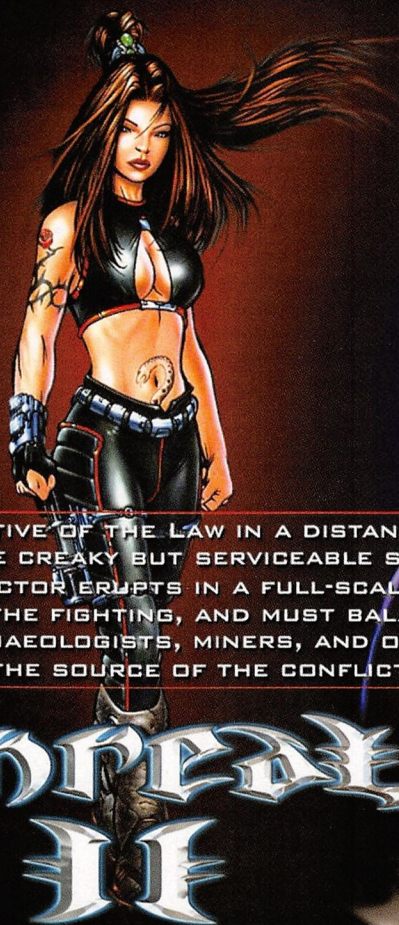
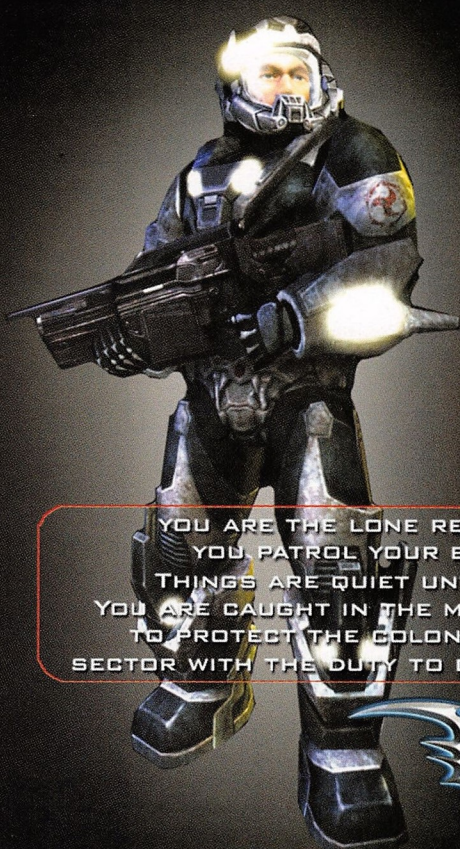
- ☐ a. Sports
- ☐ b. Bars / Nightclubs
- ☐ c. Fashion
- ☐ d. Motorsports
- ☐ e. Live bands / concerts / events
- ☐ f. Movies

And that's the end of the survey!
Once again, thanks for your time in helping make PCPP a better mag!
Now please detach these pages and pop them in the post to:

PC PowerPlay Survey
Reply Paid 634
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016



ARE YOU GAME ?



YOU ARE THE LONE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE LAW IN A DISTANT SECTOR OF SPACE ...
YOU PATROL YOUR BEAT IN THE CREAKY BUT SERVICEABLE STARSHIP ATLANTIS ...
THINGS ARE QUIET UNTIL THE SECTOR ERUPTS IN A FULL-SCALE INTERSTELLAR WAR ...
YOU ARE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FIGHTING, AND MUST BALANCE YOUR RESPONSIBILITY
TO PROTECT THE COLONISTS, ARCHAEOLOGISTS, MINERS, AND OTHER CIVILIANS IN YOUR
SECTOR WITH THE DUTY TO DISCOVER THE SOURCE OF THE CONFLICT AND PUT AN END TO THE WAR

Unreal II



Unreal TOURNAMENT 2003

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003 IS A LIGHTNING-FAST
NO-HOLDS-BARRED SPORT OF THE FUTURE, WHERE
WARRIORS FACE OFF LIKE THE GLADIATORS OF
ANCIENT ROME TO DETERMINE THE ULTIMATE COMBATANT



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ENTER THE REALM OF A RETIRED ASSASSIN,
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In this month's Issue our incredibly talented team have once again worked themselves into a frenzy reviewing the latest games - well we are PC "PowerPlay" aren't we? But enough of that, I've hijacked this page because I want to indulge myself and tell you of my family's experiences with Neverwinter Nights.

You see, I'm a lucky guy because not only is my wife the foundation on which I stand she also happens to be a gamer, more so a hardcore RPGer. As you can imagine, since the arrival of NWN to this country it's all that's been played in my home and I have nothing but praise for this game. In fact I'm amazed at its incredible depth, something I soon discovered when having to play with someone else.

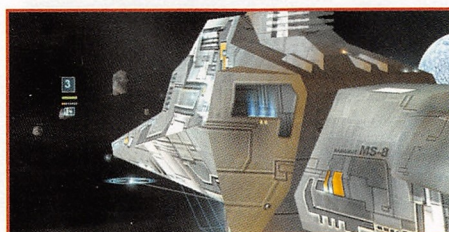
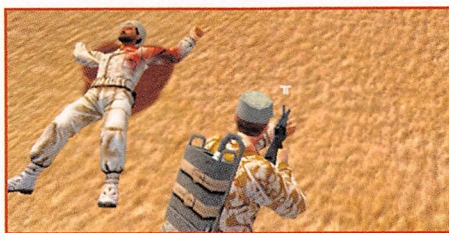
This is because unlike Dungeon Siege or Diablo 2 where you talk to very few NPCs, in NWN there's a huge number of stories, quests and sub-quests to complete. For my wife this is like a dream come true and she insists on indulging herself in every minute sub-plot NWN offers. Sure I like a good story but when it comes to RPGs I'm the kind of gamer that just wants to rush out and kill everything as quickly as possible - the story after all is only secondary to what level one is, right?

To NWN's absolute credit, it's so ingenious that it can perfectly cater to both types of player. The combat is easy and intuitive enough that you can just rush out and lay the smackdown whenever you want and yet there is so much more to it. As I was to discover, this breeds an incredible role-playing atmosphere, even if you're not a roleplayer.

To illustrate the last point, it all came to a head one night when I was forced to wait for her as she strolled around town determined to comfort every distraught NPC. It was like being dragged to the mall to endure the shoe shopping process. Irritated, my impetuous gnome wizard would run around, pets in tow, and generally make a nuisance of himself to speed her up. Then it hit me, by our dialogue and actions we were effortlessly role-playing. Take THAT you haughty pen and paper types who claimed a computer game could never be as good as the table-top experience.

Of course there's a certain up side to our different play styles. Quite often I find myself blasting the bejeezus out of uber monster X with absolutely no idea why. That's ok because all I have to do is turn to my wife to learn the reason. Roleplayers - you gotta love em!

Jere Lawrence
Deputy Editor
jerel@next.com.au



60	Medieval: Total War
64	Gore
66	Conflict Desert Storm
68	Cricket 2002
70	Syberia
72	Industry Giant 2
74	Hero X
75	Operation Flashpoint Resistance
76	A320 Professional
77	Operation Icebreaker
78	Schumacher Cart
79	Taz Wanted
80	Starmageddon
81	Mobile Forces



THE PCPP REVIEW RATINGS SYSTEM



90+	Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
89-80	A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
79-60	Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
59-40	Decidedly average, probably boring.
39-0	A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

Need	The minimum requirements to get the game running at a playable speed.
Want	The ideal system requirements for the game.
For	The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.
Against	The major reasons why you won't.

Medieval: Total War

5000 units on screen at once? Where do I sign?



DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly
PUBLISHER
Activision
DISTRIBUTOR
Activision
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
MA15+
AVAILABLE
Now



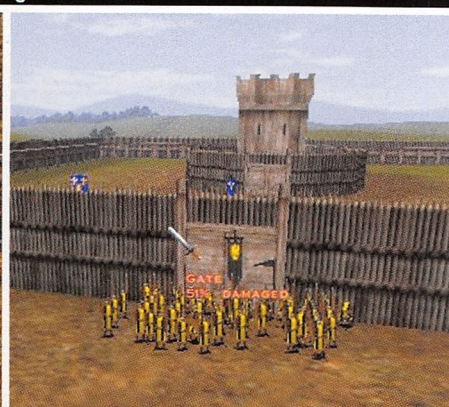
You Banquet, you will not be King



Oh! Oh, I'm going to be Queen!



Kiss me, I'm from Flanders



Can we borrow a cup of sugar?

SYSTEM

NEED

P3-450
128MB RAM
16MB Videocard
500MB HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 2100+
512MB RAM
64MB GeForce3
500MB HDD

We loved it in the 'land of the rising sun' and now as the dawn breaks over medieval European soil we are back on the battlefield in this sequel to the highly acclaimed Shogun. Medieval Total War is a thoroughly absorbing game that takes adds a few new elements while sticking to the eminently successful formula of the original game.

This time around you are the ruling sovereign trying to keep your empire growing during the turbulent Middle Ages. It is the time of The Crusades, knights in shining armour and peasants with rather large warts in all sorts of embarrassing places.

Shogun was a great game, but it was also fair to say that the different forces on offer lacked variety. There were also not really enough significantly different troop types, so the battles settled into a pattern of basic tactics pretty quickly. This is not so in Medieval: Total War, since the empires you can control are diverse: from the English with their archers to the Saracens with their nimble light horsemen. There are also ten other empires for you to command with

camel riding Turks, Teutonic knights and hordes of arrogant but powerful Frenchmen just itching to take up the cause for you.

Gaming on the bleeding edge

If you haven't seen Shogun before (which you should have as it is an excellent example of innovation even now) then it is briefly worth covering the basics. In Medieval you wage war by controlling massive armies, overseeing stronghold construction and engaging in spying, political subterfuge and diplomacy (But diplomacy's a last resort, right? - Ed).

The empires you can control are diverse: from the English with archers to the Saracens with light horsemen

This is all set in motion in the map mode, which takes a turn-based approach and works on territories. It's reminiscent of the strategy board game classic Risk. However in Medieval there is then the 3D combat aspect of the game which you get to resolve once you have made the overarching strategic decisions about your ongoing campaign. Having sent

your armies in to occupy or besiege enemy territory the game then thoughtfully pops you in the midst of a 3D real time formation-based combat mode where literally thousands of troops thrash it out the good 'olde fashioned' way with sharpened steel and a belief in the Almighty.

The game deftly balances strategic and tactical elements, but really it is the action on the battlefield as you command your troops that makes Medieval such a heady brew. Just one sip and you will be intoxicated by the possibilities and depth this game has to offer.

There are three principal unit types, and each unit type is good at dispatching a particular enemy and susceptible to an attack from another unit type. Cavalry and especially Knights are great at mowing down archers, but are vulnerable to spearmen. Archers are superb at cutting down other slow moving footsloggers, but can be



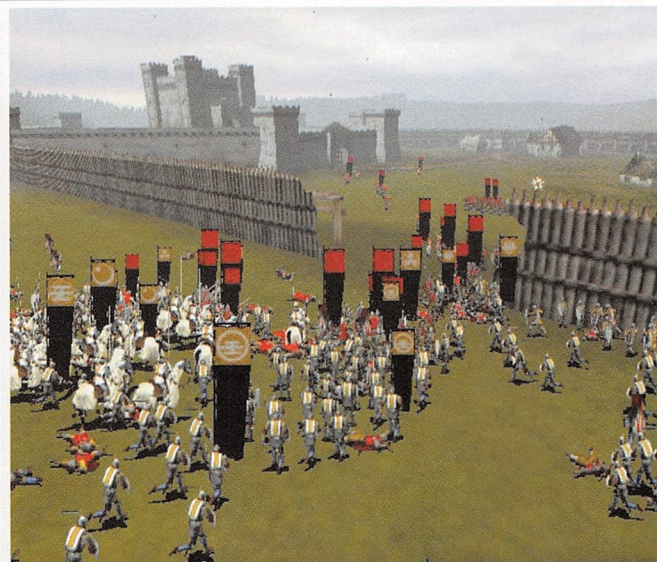
Steeplechasing, so cruel on the horses



See, this is what Sunday School used to be all about



I guess a pony ride is out of the question?



Last one in the pool has to eat his horse!

A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE



You can also now take prisoners while fighting. This gives you a sense of power and presents you with an interesting strategic decision. Do you hang on to your prisoners so that you may ransom them later, or should you slaughter them as the battle rages. The latter decision can terrorise the enemy into retreating as they realise that you are not letting any of their number live no matter what the circumstances.

ripped to shreds by a fast moving cavalry charge.

Paper scissors rock?

Terrain and using the right unit for the right job matters enormously in this game. If you are unfortunate (like this tactically ill-prepared scribe) you can have as many as 600 English troops and still be wiped out by a mere 300 enemy soldiers if they are clever enough to hide in the forest atop a hill, shower you with arrows, and then send their footsloggers smashing into your ranks while the remaining archers hang back and keep whittling your reinforcements away with more arrow fire.

In my case, to add insult to injury just as the battle appeared to be heading in a more favourable direction, my General broke ranks and ran, to be followed by the bulk of the remaining troops. This pretty much sealed the fate of the plucky poms and again made it less likely that I would be declared Europe's sole Regent in the near future.

Tactical action is extremely compelling in this game. It's all about getting the enemy to engage you on your terms, when the terrain and tactical mix suits you. You and your foe often have to engage in a deadly

dance of feints and flanking manoeuvres until you can get stuck into the fight proper, but this all adds to the excitement before combat is joined. Knights also sometimes just brazenly charge into battle mucking up your well laid plans. That said the knights are so powerful that they can consistently get away with being such impetuous fellows, panicking the main body of the enemy force so that sometimes you have to love em even when they go for blood.

Smoke on the water

The visuals in the turn based mode are very similar to Shogun, but the real time mode benefits from greater detail, massive castles to smash (or hide in) and lots of siege weaponry.

The context-sensitive audio is brilliant with your advisor chiming in with a bit of well timed sledging proclaiming the defeated enemy general the "son of a craven whore" when you win.

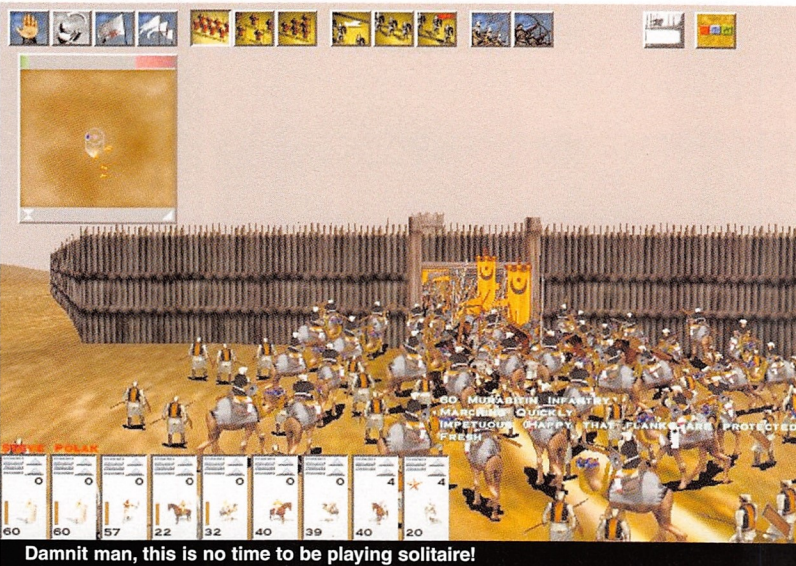
Compared to Shogun there are quite a few improvements too. Your troops' behaviour is now flagged by comments like 'happy because their flanks are protected' or 'worried about

GOOD KNIGHT KIDS

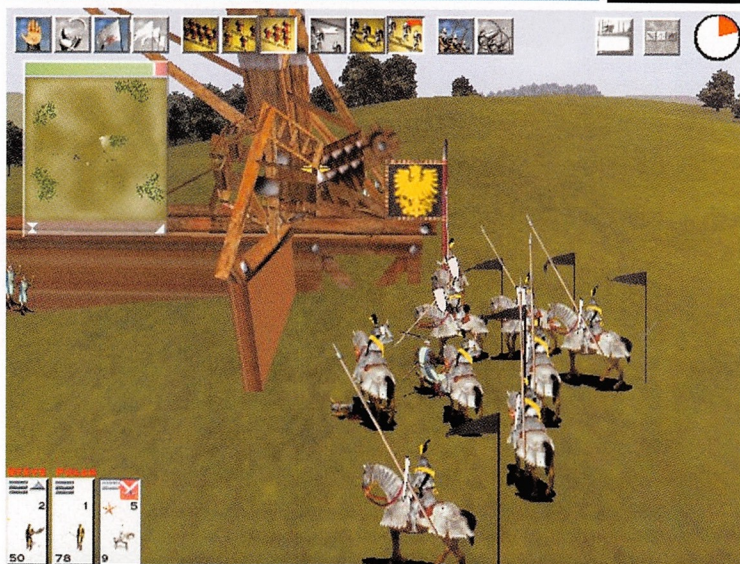


You will often be amazed by how devastating these 'medieval tanks' can be on the battlefield. A mere a score or two knights charging down a hill can have a devastating effect on the enemy, sending them packing or seeing

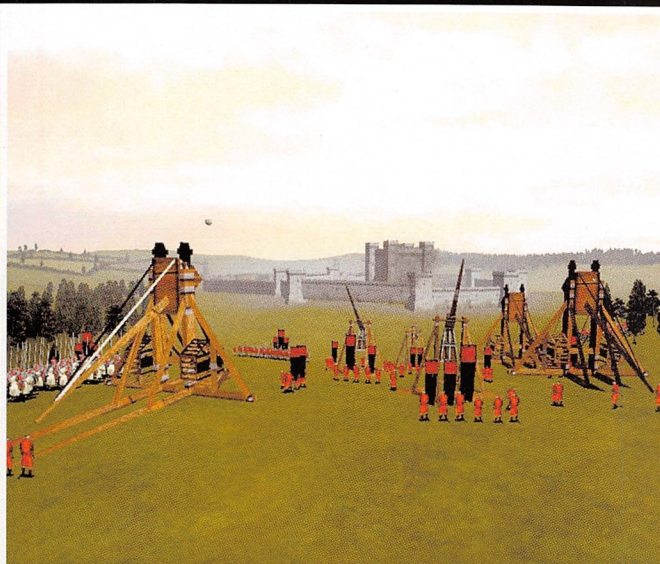
them sliced and diced more thoroughly than a rabid sushi chef with a Ginzu. However as the march of time continues you will find the knight isn't quite as powerful in the later historical epochs when more professional soldiers and better missile weapons blunt their attack. You will then have to learn to use your mounted marauders more sparingly in circumstances when mobility is important - like running down the enemy general or outflanking the main body of enemy troops so you can get at their missile and siege units lolling about in the rear.



Damnit man, this is no time to be playing solitaire!



Hey it's that thing from the 'Cloudbursting' film clip. I love Kate Bush



Just sit here in this little basket, and my French friend will pull the handle...

so many casualties' which helps you get a feel for their mood before they bolt and run. There are also special goals for certain civilisations and three principal religious groups. You will even be given edicts by your religious leader, with Crusades for The Pope a pretty common thing. There are also neutral countries ripe for the taking as long as you can defeat the rebel forces. Smashing the uppity Scot William Wallace is one of the early challenges you must overcome if you play as the English.

There is more actual strategy on offer here than most mainstream realtime strategy games

The interface does take some time to get the hang of though, and the lengthy tutorial is worth your while as it is all too easy to feel like your troops are running amok without direction in the heat of battle unless you have your wits about you. That said this time around there is more support from devices such as pop up help. There are also new screens to better access details regarding your armies, generals and what is happening with your heirs.

History lesson

Geography has been factored into the action. If you attack one province, say a mountainous region such as Scotland from a flatter area like the North of England, then the in-game action map will reflect this putting your troops at the bottom of a huge hill. There are also historical campaigns (The Crusades, Mongol Invasion of Europe, El Cid) which take the form of quick scenarios you can play in strategic mode by itself. The

they are usefully contributing to the overall result, but not getting decimated is the key here. Indeed if you keep your core units (like knights) away from trouble you may be doing them more of a disservice than you realise.

The better part of valour?

By protecting such troops and preserving their numbers they may suffer a Valour penalty and after being away from the front lines won't be as prepared to go the hard yards when you really need them. This is also the case with your Generals, so you have to balance your approach. Be aggressive, but don't suffer too many casualties. Medieval is very cleverly conceived in this sense as the unit AI takes a lot into account.

You can automate the game to manage unit training, stronghold construction, taxation and even the assignment of titles to your Generals. These options, especially the latter two, are very useful to have switched on when you are just getting the hang of the game as they let you focus on the more important

significant people in the game, Generals, relatives, etc all have an impact on the unfolding campaign and there are even peasant revolts.

In battle sometimes you will find reputation can be everything as your troops' Valour rating (which is denoted by a number on their unit sheet) helps determine how courageously they follow through in battle when the going gets tough. Keeping your troops in a place where



"The bear went over the mountain la la etc"



I don't like the new Community Centre

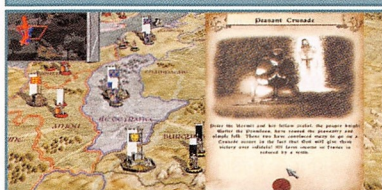


Enemy, the French, these are redundant terms surely?



Oh lord the dog's gone and shat in the tucker box!

RISKY BUSINESS



Medieval might at first seem a little disjointed as the overall strategic map board stuff seems to be at odd with the more sumptuous looking 3D real time strategy elements. However the two gel perfectly. On the one hand you have the ability to make sweeping changes which shape the political landscape of Europe, but then you get to command the armies that make it happen conquering and slaughtering the enemy man by man. The way the game lets you manage war on these two levels in an integrated way is really unique.

aspects of the gameplay.

It is also worth mentioning that the resource management aspects of the game are perhaps the only elements which are slightly flawed. The construction and build queues could have perhaps been better designed to

show you at a glance what buildings lead to what improvements. Instead you have to right click on each construction type to read the building details and determine how a particular construction fits into the technology tree. This is only annoying when you first begin playing the game, but coupled with the complex map board stuff like managing taxes, the use of official titles and other diplomacy and empire management tasks, makes Medieval somewhat daunting at first. This is doubly so if you aren't particularly well-versed in turn based strategy games such as Civilization.

Potentiometer

Now that we are on the subject of Civ it is worth noting that in Medieval multiplayer will have a fair degree of potential for the turn based gamers out there. RTS speed click maniacs might find the battle a bit too torpid, but the truth is there is more actual strategy on offer here than most mainstream realtime strategy games offer in multiplayer mode. The scrambling for better terrain, the flanking and playing chicken as you

try and goad your opponent into attacking you on your terms on offer in Medieval better defines the concept of 'strategy' than the harvester hunting which so typifies most RTS titles. It also has a basis in historical reality so it feels more concrete.

Finally, and we are being harsh here, it would have been nice to be able to have an idea what your archers' and other missile units range limits are. In setting up formations and especially ambushes involving forests or forces concealed behind a hill, it would be great if you could even have a vague idea about the missile ranges of your non melee units so your deployment perfectly suits your devilish plan. You do get a feel for range limits, but it is imprecise especially when you take into effect issues like the way you get longer range by firing missiles downhill.

Medieval is a consummately detailed and balanced effort which delivers much that will challenge you on a strategic and tactical level and is the only 'serious' real time war game better than Shogun.

Steve Polak

RATING

FOR

- Engrassing combat
- Tactical + strategic combination
- Singleplayer depth

AGAINST

- Somewhat inaccessible
- Fiddly camera
- System reqs

OVERALL

Truly the ultimate in 'big battle' military simulations

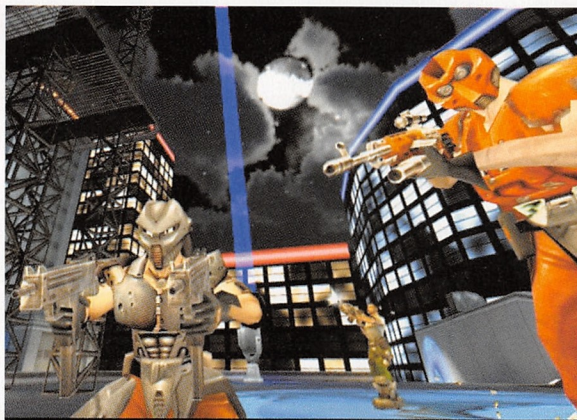
92

Gore

Sadly folks, it's not very good

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
4D Rulers
PUBLISHER
Take 2
DISTRIBUTOR
Take 2
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
MA15+
AVAILABLE
Now



Party freaks in zombie town



Now that is a head of hair



It looks cool, but it isn't cool

MODAL

In an attempt to be different - from Quake 3 if not from Unreal Tournament - Gore offers several different game modes out of the box. These include the usual Deathmatch, the likewise usual Capture the Flag, a Team Deathmatch option and also a Tactical mode. Tactical mode adds limited objectives to each DM level, which basically involve running to one location and then running back to another location. That's about as advanced as it gets, tactically.

SYSTEM

NEED

P3-450
64MB RAM
16MB Videocard
500MB HDD

WANT

Athlon 900
128MB RAM
32MB GeForce2
500MB HDD

Oddly enough, in recent months it has become increasingly rare for PCPP to receive a game for review that is truly, honestly not worth playing. The extremely unforgiving market here in Australia, the smaller number of game distributors and, yes, the generally satisfactory to very good standard of titles in this country have all contributed to this pleasing state of affairs.

But still, once in a while, we receive a game in the PCPP offices that is simply not worth your trouble. Gore is such a game.

To be fair, it has its work cut out for it. Jumping into the multiplayer-only Deathmatch genre is a gruelling prospect, equal only to the challenge of carving a name for yourself as a fantasy-based MMORPG.

The Big Three

As we know, there are three DM games that are widely played; Quake 3 Arena, Unreal Tournament and Counter-Strike. And of those three, CS is significantly different owing to its team-based dynamic. Tribes 2 is also played widely, if not as populously as the three core titles.

Now comes Gore, attempting to muscle in on Quake 3's speed, Unreal Tournament's gameplay variety and Counter-Strike's awesome installed user-base with... nothing. Gore's first and core problem is that it offers absolutely nothing significantly new to the genre, beyond a sense of novelty that wears off all too quickly. It shamelessly rips off ideas from the games that went before it, and fails to implement these features effectively.

The game uses a bespoke 3D engine called AMP, which does for 3D gaming what crappy copper wiring did for ISPs in the bush. The AMP engine is three years younger than the Quake 3 engine, and yet has no curved surfaces, almost no animated textures and no moving objects - no doors, lifts, pendulums, nothing dynamic at all. So the experience of running through a Gore Level is one of some bizarre frozen world, disturbed only by the occasional flickering lamp.

Add to this a selection of 18 fairly mediocre weapons (not "over 30" as the back of the box claims), only ten player models, a collection of fairly obvious items, and only one powerup which

takes the form of a shameless Quad Damage ripoff called a MAD.

The New Black?

Gore does add a couple of newish things to an out-of-the-box deathmatch experience. Firstly, there are five player classes - light scout, light infantry, medium infantry, heavy infantry and heavy mech infantry. Each class has different health, armour, speed and weapons capabilities and spawns with a different set of default weapons. However, remember that there are only 10 player models, so for each class there are only two skins to choose from. The models are grouped into two opposing sides, the UMC 'Good Guys' on the one hand and the evil MOB on the other.

The other new aspect of Gore is the stamina bar. Stamina is used by jumping and running around, and the lower the stamina bar gets the slower the player moves and the louder a fairly irritating panting sound effect plays. These penalties do affect play tactics, especially the panting which makes it harder to hear enemies approaching.

Stamina also creates the need for

AUSTRALIAN MADE ?



Previews in this and other media outlets have made much of Australia's involvement in Gore. Brisbane-based company Eyecon worked on the title in some poorly specified capacity which, judging from their website, we can only assume to be work on the engine and on the network code. There were in fact three separate companies involved in Gore, including 4D Rulers, Slammed Software and our own Eyecon. And by inference we can tell that making a PC game by committee has indeed resulted in the uninspired mess that Gore so obviously is.



So help me I will shove this up your nose



Ooh, an underground bunker corridor, how innovative



When I lack gameplay, I like to take "GUTSMORE" gib juice

an extra pickup item, namely a stamina boost. The immediate effect of stamina is to all but eliminate the classic DM tactic of repeatedly jumping to avoid splash damage from weapons such as the rocket launcher.

The thinking behind including stamina seems similar to some RTS developers' response to the 'problem' of tank rushing - add in an arbitrary penalisation system, in this case to stop 'bunny hopping', that actually in effect impedes gameplay and makes the character seem at times almost stuck to the ground. Add to this the fact that the loud panting noise kicks in not when stamina hits the low fifties as you'd expect, but when it drops below 80! This makes it impossible to run for more than ten seconds or so without having to pick up a stamina boost. Naturally, this distracts terribly from the main task at hand, namely blowing up the opposition.

Flavour of the month

Once online however, Gore does offer a decent if limited DM alternative, but only on crowded servers. Most maps are generously sized and require at least six

to eight players to be interesting. The character classes also add variety, and the 'real world' locations of the maps, such as a haunted house, downtown New York, or a Texas dude ranch, all offer indoor and outdoor areas, multiple sniper points and other opportunities for more than just run-and-gun gameplay.

But Gore's biggest and least forgivable crime is the lack of bots. Somehow, incredibly, the developers (all three of them, see boxout) thought it unnecessary to include any computer controlled AI opponents. Quake 3 may itself have some levels that are too big for one-on-one or even two-on-two, but this problem can be largely solved by the addition of five or six Hardcore bots to keep the game flowing. Gore just doesn't offer this, so unless you happen upon a crowded server, the game is next to useless. Why couldn't 4D Rulers employ any of the thousands of bot programmers currently working on unsupported AI routines for Counter-Strike, Doom OpenGL ports and the like?

The last straw

Finally, Gore offers an offline singleplayer mode that is so truly

ordinary that had it comprised the entirety of the game we would have awarded Gore a score of no more than 8%. We are talking Mission Humanity levels of crapulence here folks.

Run through the default Deathmatch maps in order, chasing a MOB operative who is carrying "information". That's your back story. Kill the same five opponents over and over again - the campaign uses the default player models for all its enemies. Marvel at enemy AI which manages to point its gun at you and fire, but not actually move or respond in any way to your actions. Maybe six years ago this was acceptable. But even Doom's 'dumb' monsters were designed in such a way as to appear more or less intelligent. Gore's singleplayer AI is just dumb. We've seen sentry guns that display more lifelike combat behaviour.

If Gore was free we could recommend it as a download for a quick and dirty alternative to endless games of CS and Q3A. But as a full-priced title it seems either wholly ignorant or a shameless grab for cash from an undereducated market. But we're not undereducated anymore, are we folks?

Anthony Fordham

RATING

FOR

- Stable multiplayer code
- Real-world levels

AGAINST

- Lacklustre weapons
- Limited player models
- Low-tech engine
- Awful singleplayer mode

OVERALL

A gallant attempt to bring a new player into the arena, but one that falls flat on its face

46

Conflict Desert Storm

Sand in your bracket won't dull the shine of this one!

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Pivotal Games
PUBLISHER
SCI
DISTRIBUTOR
Take 2
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
MA15+
AVAILABLE
Now



Now, where should I stick this in him?



Outside 78 Renwick St, Redfern, 1415h



It's simple Sparks, this missile is TOO BIG for this plane

NEED A LITTLE HELP?

CDS features a very useful training mode which all players are recommended to utilise before entering the main game. Although the tips issued by a screaming drill sergeant instructor tend toward the incomprehensible, on-screen text provides some much-needed assistance. Additionally, before and during each mission players are also able to access a menu of objectives, each of which comes with a suggested tactical approach. These helpful hints were actually written by Cameron Spence, a real life ex-SAS soldier who assisted with some of the technical aspects of CDS's development.

SYSTEM

NEED

P3-667
64MB RAM
16MB Videocard
800MB HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1700+
256MB RAM
32MB GeForce2
800MB HDD

August 1990. Iraq invades Kuwait and the world is plunged into the first multi-national armed conflict since World War 2 (Er, except Korea and Vietnam right? Or were they just police actions? - Ed). Although during and after the Gulf War and Operation Desert Storm, Stormin' Norman Schwarzkopf became a household name and Saddam Hussein the butt of many jokes, it was all still a serious matter and a touchy subject. Who would have thought back then that the Gulf War would provide the subject matter for a computer game (even one that does take a few historical liberties)?

Conflict Desert Storm is a squad-based, third person action/strategy game that has snuck up out of nowhere (Except for our preview in PCPP#66 - Ed). Players take control of a squad of up to four British SAS or US Delta Force troops. As you might expect, a typical squad is composed of a rifleman, sniper, demolitions expert, and a heavy gunner. Although there are some minor differences between the British and American forces, these do not drastically affect gameplay.

Although similar in several respects to Ghost Recon, the focus in CDS is more on action rather than brain-straining strategy. While missions will require some pre-planning and thinking through, action-minded players won't be hampered by one-shot kills. Given the small size of your squad, a clandestine approach to most missions is recommended (and makes for more rewarding gameplay), but it's certainly by no means fatal if a more direct approach is taken, or if the alarm is inadvertently raised.

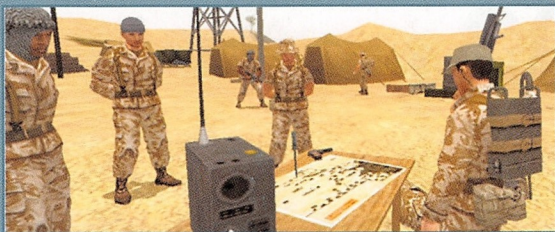
Get ready for action!

The missions themselves are the usual assortment that you'd expect to find in games of this ilk: hostage rescue, escort and protection of important NPCs, assassinations, and demolition runs. Each mission is comprised of an average of four objectives (which usually, but not always, have to be completed in order) that players must accomplish before proceeding to a designated extraction point. A text summary puts missions in a basic historical context, and is then followed by a brief cutscene providing a bit of

background to the mission. Short video snippets of mission objectives with voiceovers then round out the pre-mission briefing. The feel is more like a Hollywood movie rather than a grim-faced and serious intelligence briefing. It suits the style of gameplay well and doesn't burden players with boring extraneous detail.

The controls in CDS feel a little awkward at first but soon become second nature. Apart from employing a typical FPS control system, keys on the left side of the keyboard are used to pick up and use objects, as well as to issue commands to team members. The control system allows players to use medikits to heal other team members, as well as pass on extra ammunition when a mate's stock runs dry. Cycling through your inventory can become a bit fiddly, especially when the squad is under heavy fire. When the pressure is on, players might find themselves trying to lay some C4 explosive on a demolitions job and instead mistakenly select and toss a grenade. This could result an interesting turn of events, particularly if your team happens to be in a confined space.

I NEED MORE POWER!



For a military title, where the destructive and lethal feel of the available weaponry is all-important, CDS offers a bit of a mixed bag. The standard M-16 rifle sounds and feels a bit timid and players can generally fire accurately at will, unlike the recoil of the M-60 heavy machine gun that feels uncontrollable (but in a good way). Similarly, while there is plenty of recoil and satisfying devastating force on the bazooka and rocket launcher, the grenades feel like throwdowns. Fortunately, the sniper rifle has plenty of stopping power and feels realistically balanced.



Alright Mr Howard, we'll see who should be allowed to watch rude movies on SBS...



Goat party! Woot!



This damn curry has set fire to my parachute!

Can you hear me soldier?

Control of team members is fairly basic, with players only able to issue simple commands such as follow, hold, and open fire. Without a waypoint system or general map feature, team members can only be sent to positions within your line of sight. Of course, you can also easily switch between control of team members to overcome this slight difficulty. The reason behind this control system, which some players may find a little too restrictive and overly simplistic for their liking, is that CDS is a multi-platform release. There are only so many combinations of commands our console-playing cousins can issue.

Team members issued with orders are generally intelligent enough to move to where you send them. There should be no instances of team members becoming stuck, or standing in corners like they're playing a game of hide-and-seek. However, when it comes to taking the least visible route to a certain point, team members are a little more stupid. They are also substantially slower than the player-controlled character, which

means you'll often find them taking the most direct path to catch up, regardless of whether that route happens to be right through an enemy encampment or past a heavy machinegun emplacement. Reaction to enemy fire is another minor issue, as AI team members will often not return fire if fired upon (That's a MINOR issue? - Ed).

Enemy AI is similarly solid in single player mode and the three levels of difficulty are well adjusted to make CDS accessible for novices and veterans alike. While the overall AI generally pretty good, it is one area that could have been tightened up a little.

I can't get rid of this sand!

Given the Gulf War theme, there isn't much variety in the exterior maps. The terrain looks unsurprisingly similar from mission to mission; one continuous sand-coloured blur. Although it is something that probably really couldn't be helped, some more detail could have been added to the maps apart from the occasional passing goatherd with his herd of goats. To their credit, the developer has mixed up the mission maps so that they're not all

desert-based. Missions will take players to war-ravaged city streets and into room-to-room fighting within enemy controlled buildings.

CDS features a standard arsenal of weaponry to have 'fun' with. Although most of the action will take place from a third person perspective, players can also switch to an aiming mode in first person view when greater accuracy is required. One nice little feature is that you'll also be able to easily call in air and laser-guided missile strikes. It's particularly satisfying to sit back and watch the mayhem ensue (And the civilians get toasted, right? - Ed).

Whilst it may have received little pre-release fanfare, CDS is now ready to get players excited. The more politically correct gamers out there will have shrewdly noted that the opposing Iraqi forces are not playable in singleplayer mode, and that the game carries a distinctive one-eyed Allied Forces perspective.

Perhaps both issues might be addressed in a mission add-on pack or a sequel, because CDS is good enough to deserve both.

Derek Lee

RATING

FOR

- High entertainment
- Good mix of action and covert gameplay
- Accessible but still challenging

AGAINST

- Long load times
- Questionable AI issues
- Map similarities

OVERALL

A sleeper title that impresses across the board and shouldn't go unnoticed for too long.

90

Cricket 2002

"We don't like Cricket, No, No ... We love it!"

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
EA Sports
PUBLISHER
EA Sports
DISTRIBUTOR
Electronic Arts
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
G
AVAILABLE
Now



My God I think his neck is broken!



Bet you can't hit me in the gnads!



"And the Australian batsman is making yet another obscene gesture..."

JUST LIKE ON TV

Cricket 2002 nicely captures the atmosphere of the professional game. Television style overlays and commentary (by non-other than Richie Benaud and Jim Maxwell) make the game feel very lifelike, or at-least very TV-like. Further enforcing the real-life television feel is the inclusion of the video referee, and slow motion replays of crucial moments. For example, after a batsman is called out by LBW, the game cuts to a slow motion replay of the bowl, complete with television overlays showing the path of the ball and commentary on the (sometimes incorrect) decision.

SYSTEM

NEED

A relatively good computer with a decent videocard and a lot of RAM

WANT

A slightly better computer with a good videocard and a bunch more RAM

For some people, the game of Cricket is a way of life. Others liken it to watching grass grow. Either way, it's serves as yet another excellent example of us thrashing the Poms in a game they invented, and thrashing Poms is fun, so even people that really hate watching grass grow can't complain too much about the release of Electronic Art's latest sporting title, Cricket 2002.

Turning sports games into enjoyable computer games can be a daunting task. The problem lies in believably simulating the challenge of performing complex sporting activities, such as bowling or batting, using a keyboard or joystick, and making it easy and fun at the same time. Happily, Cricket 2002 manages to overcome these obstacles with intuitive, versatile, and fun controls for both batting and bowling.

Insightful gameplay

Each bowler has a unique arsenal of deliveries, for example, leg-spinners can choose from, "regular" (leg-spinner), "flipper" or "googly" (AKA "wrong 'un"). Other types of bowlers include "pace bowlers", "swing bowlers", and "off-spinners". When bowling, the player first

selects the type of delivery they wish to perform. The bowl is then aimed with one set of keys, while the ball movement (spin) is adjusted with a second set of keys (the game is controlled by two sets of directional keys: the arrow keys, and the tried and true WASD combo). There is also a "power bar" which affects the speed of the delivery; trying to bowl too fast will often result in a "no-ball".

Batsmen are controlled using the same keys. This time, one set of "directional" keys is used to position the batsman (and determine if the shot is advanced upon, played off the front-foot, or played off the back-foot), while the other set is used to determine the

timed differently depending on the bowl, and which type of stroke you're attempting. Badly timed shots will not go as far as well timed shots, in addition they may accidentally be chipped into the air, risking getting caught out. Needless to say, the type of stroke you choose to play will directly influence how successful the shot is.

For example, trying to swat a "yorker" with a "hook-shot" will most likely see the middle stump cart-wheeling behind the not-so-bright batsman. There is also a special "power" button for when you want to give it a real slog. If timed and directed well, you'll see the ball racing for the

Warnie appears as though he's inhaled a lungful of the Joker's Smilex Gas

direction of the shot. The different combinations result in differing batting strokes. For example, if you direct the shot diagonally behind the batsman, off the back foot, the resulting stroke will be a "hook-shot" or "cut-shot", while if you play the shot off the front foot and straight ahead, you will be attempting a "straight drive". Each shot must be

boundary, or sailing for six, but if mistimed, you can easily get caught out.

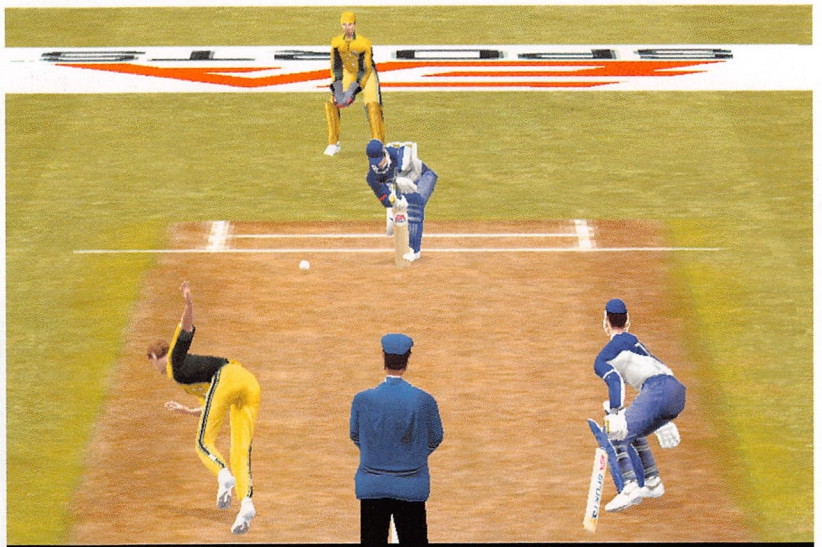
Howzzzzaaatttt!?

The batting and bowling are recreated very well, but it's a shame that the same cannot be said for the wicket-keeper. After days of playing, I never once witnessed a good bowl catch the

GAME OPTIONS



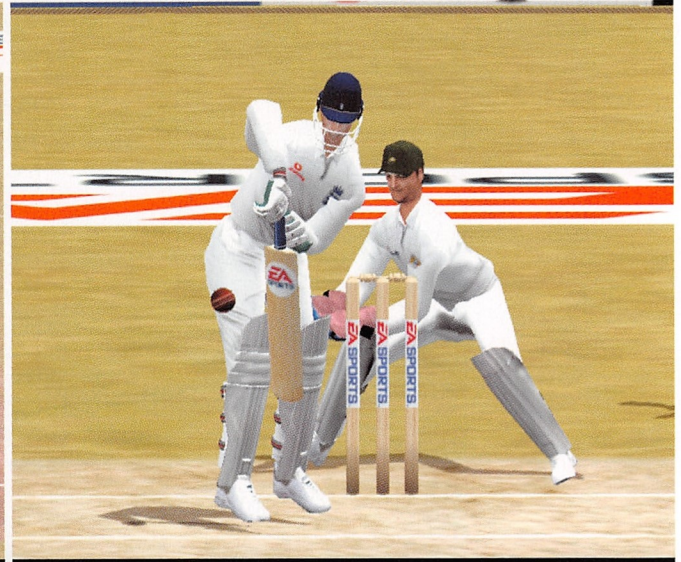
There are several variables that can be adjusted before a match. After choosing teams, (all the major cricketing nations are represented) you then have the option of selecting one of the twenty-two real-life international stadiums and adjusting the environmental details. This not only includes the ability to change the weather and temperature, but also the condition of the pitch. There are several different types of pitch conditions possible (such as "hard", "damp", "dusty", "green" etc.), all of which affect the bowling and batting in unique and realistic ways. Weather and pitch conditions are assigned randomly in tournaments.



"And plucky Brett Lee has knocked the batsman's leg right off!"



Who let that bus conductor in there?



"Catch the ball man, not his arse!"

edge of the bat and get "caught behind". The wicket keeper is largely anonymous in Cricket 2002, the only thing he seems to do is catch missed bowls or occasionally "stump" an unwary batsman. Likewise, the slips fielders are equally useless since it seems impossible to accidentally chip the ball backwards.

Cricket 2002 allows for all the standard types of game options, allowing one-off exhibition matches and various types of one-day and test cricket tournaments. A nice touch is the ability to practise your batting or bowling in the nets.

The graphics are acceptable, but only excel with the smooth and superbly realistic batting and bowling animations. The only notable visual flaws are the very flat and not particularly energetic crowds, and the poor player likenesses. Warnie appears as though he's inhaled a lungful of the Joker's Smilex Gas, while Brett Lee looks like he's just bitten down on the most wicked sour-bomb of all time (either that, or he's doing an impressive impersonation of a bulldog's back-end). These minor amusements aside, the visuals in Cricket 2002 are

actually pretty good, especially for those lucky enough to have video cards that support anti-aliasing.

A wobbly old googly

Unfortunately, the game is ultimately let down by numerous bugs. The title is obviously under-tested and rushed. Both of the systems I played the game on showed unique glitches as well as sharing several common ones. The first system showed mild graphical glitches (white beams stretching across the field) while the second demonstrated sound problems. Also on one of the systems, loading saved games resulted in having to play the rest of the match on a jet-black cricket field, as the textures are not properly reloaded. This made Test matches virtually unplayable (unless you're happy to play the game for a straight ten hours). Furthermore, the commentary is occasionally blatantly contradictory. Maxwell seems to suggest "introducing the spinners into the attack" after every over, regardless of whether the spinners have already been bowling or not, while Benaud sometimes simultaneously criticises and agrees

with an umpire's decision (Sorry, what's unusual here? - Ed). In addition, the default key configurations start with the two sets of directional keys back-to-front. The WASD keys are used to navigate menus while the arrows keys are used to make selections. This is probably due to some sort of ludicrously obvious mix-up when porting the game from console. Reconfiguring the keys causes yet more problems, as they randomly stop working properly. This type of unfinished product is inexcusable, even in today's age of rushed, release-and-patch-later software engineering.

Hardcore cricket fans may be able to ignore the bugs - some may be lucky enough to have a system that will run the game bug-free - but Cricket 2002 will leave others feeling ripped-off. It's truly unfortunate that EA has failed to make Cricket 2002 a stable and robust title. Without the bugs, Cricket 2002 would have been by far the best cricket game ever made, and could have easily scored in the high eighties. As it is, it's recommended that cricket buffs wait for a patch before considering a purchase.

Victor Webster

RATING

FOR

- Intuitive Controls
- Lifelike
- TV Presentation

AGAINST

- Buggy
- Useless Wicket Keeper
- Funny Walks

OVERALL

An excellent cricket game all but ruined by annoying bugs

75

Syberia

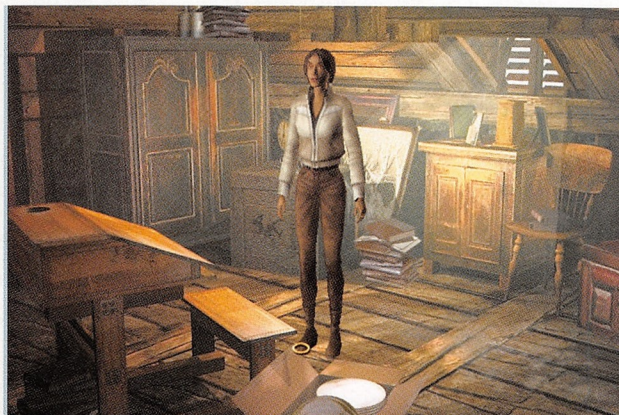
Where mammoths meet mechanical men in the Alps. Seriously

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Microids
PUBLISHER
Microids
DISTRIBUTOR
Red Ant
PRICE
\$69.95
RATING
G8+
AVAILABLE
Now



It's your basic mysterious Russian University



It's your basic mysterious French Alpine attic

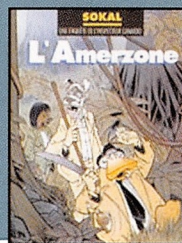
AUTHOR, AUTHOR!

Unlike almost every other genre, Adventure games really are often written by a single person rather than a team of crack scripters and a caffeine-dependant Executive Producer. Syberia is the second outing for one Benoit Sokal, a gentleman of eastern European extraction who previously wrote comics and the odd self-published novel. As a stabled writer for one of Europe's biggest comic book producers, Sokal was one day accosted by his editor and told to apply his talents to the emergent multimedia market,

because surely CD-ROM would put the printed word out of business within the financial year. Sokal turned his eye toward gaming, picked up a publishing deal with Microids, and churned out Amerzone, a similarly obscure adventure that clearly sold well enough to warrant a second game.

We weren't actually able to locate any examples of Sokal's comic book work, but

here are the covers of three of his graphic novels, showing that he apparently used to favour anthropomorphised ducks and tigers having Indiana Jones type adventures. Wild.



SYSTEM

NEED

Celeron 500
32MB RAM
16MB Videocard
300MB HDD

WANT

Duron 1.1GHz
64MB RAM
32MB GeForce2
600MB HDD

How did this happen to the noble Adventure game? How did the backbone of any distributor's revenue stream turn into a loose collection of budget titles and Myst-clones, developed and published in minor former-Soviet-Union countries such as Khazmakstazkstan? Is this the logical final evolutionary step after the genetic degradation of the King's Quest series into bad Disney-esque song-and-dance numbers for kindies? Is Syberia all we, as Adventure fans, have to look forward to?

Actually, it's not all bad, because Syberia has a strong and engaging story, a moderately sized cast of fairly interesting characters, a few twists and turns and an intriguing setting. But there are serious flaws.

Hansel and Gretel

The time is more or less now, although possibly in a slightly parallel dimension. A world in which robots and electronic toys have superseded the older, more aesthetic 'automata' or clockwork toys.

The home of the very best automata is Valadeline, a charming little burg in the French Alps. The Voralberg factory

is all but shut down, and the lawyers have been dispatched to secure the takeover by entertainment megacorporation Universal Toys. Oddly enough, the player character is one of these lawyers, a lass by the name of Kate Walker.

Kate arrives in Valadeline to find that the owner of the factory, Anna Voralberg has unfortunately passed away. Fortunately, the local half-wit drops a couple of clues, and one quick visit to the local notary later reveals that the heir to the Voralberg factory may indeed still be alive. Thence, it's on to adventure, with wild locations, a clockwork train, and mammoths.

increases difficulty by making every manipulable object in the game blend perfectly into the background.

This wouldn't be so bad, since we are all more than used to passing our mouse cursors over every square centimetre of a screen looking for puzzles or clues, but the objects in the game don't even have descriptions until you've picked them up and put them in your inventory.

Probably the worst-offending object in the early part of the game is a key to the Voralberg factory. The notary even tells Kate the key is in his outer office and free for the taking. So Kate wanders out, examines the desk, examines the shelves, examines the cabinet, even

Syberia is full of roadblocks, where Quantum leaps of lateral thinking are required to progress further.

Obfuscation (sic)

Now, this reviewer is not ashamed to admit that after thrashing around with Syberia for an hour or two, he went online and grabbed a walkthrough so he could at least see how the various puzzles worked and how the story panned out. This is because Syberia

examines the door. The key, as it turns out, is a metre-long T-shaped metal bar, stored in the umbrella stand. Confused? It gets worse.

Phone rage

Now this next bit is a spoiler but trust me, you'll thank me for it. At the very



It's your basic irritating pointless pastoral location

TURN OFF YOUR MOBILE!

Syberia assumes the player has a familiarity with that most essential of all inner-city devices, the mobile phone. And fair enough too, the mobile is more or less ubiquitous, owned by the elderly and infirm and the wet behind the ears alike. But does Syberia's depiction of mobile behaviour have to be so bloody realistic? Kate's phone is constantly ringing, and all play must stop while she painstakingly removes the thing from her jacket, opens

it, puts it to her ear and then waits patiently while her boyfriend whines on and on about how she's missing some concert or other, or her mother insists that she come home soon so they can go shopping, or her boss barks mindless orders that mean nothing. Combined with the bloody steps, the Mobile of +2 Constant Ringing really takes the shine off this game.



These are your basic mysterious giant elephant statues



Finally, your basic weird-looking inaccessible building

beginning of the game, Kate arrives at the local hotel, is shown to her room, picks up a fax from her New York office, is told that Anna Voralberg is dead, and is then left to her own devices. Back downstairs, Kate is prevented from leaving by the 'storm' which she intends to wait out. Then, she runs out of things to do.

The secret is to examine the inventory and note that Kate has a mobile phone. Then examine the fax from work, and note the paragraph that advises Kate to give them a call if anything seems amiss. So type out the number on the phone keypad, and the game moves on.

Syberia is full of roadblocks like this, where real Quantum leaps of lateral thinking (and searching for objects you don't realise you already have) are required to progress further. This works in a more static, puzzling-for-puzzling's sake game such as Riven, but for a narrative-driven game like Syberia, it only frustrates.

Five, six, seven, eight!

Let's talk about steps. Syberia uses a 2D-rendered backdrop with 3D-

polygonal characters walking around on it. And the developer has put in a lot of effort to integrate the two. This means that angles are correct, the characters pass behind and in front of pre-rendered objects, and Kate even climbs up and down steps in such a way that her feet appear to hit each step and her hand holds the banister. Now, this may look very nice but unfortunately it turns gameplay into screaming, treacle-mired hell. Kate can either walk (glacially slow) or run (pitiful jog) but when she reaches a stairway, she pauses, shuffles her feet into the correct position, and then slowly climbs the stairs. This wouldn't be too much of a problem except that there are stairs on every second screen.

Also, while the backgrounds are pre-rendered, the developer obviously wanted to show off the talents of the art team to best effect. So there are dozens of what could best be described as 'pointless' locations - locations that are halfway between two places where things actually get done. So Kate enters a garden path, walks down it a bit, walks down it a bit more... and a bit more... a bit more still... and

then gets to an actual interactive location. It's clear that the Syberia team has taken inspiration from Myst and Riven, forgetting that while Riven users can say "Hmn, nice intermediary screen, click" and move instantly to the next location, Syberia users have to wait ten or fifteen seconds for Kate to amble her way across the screen. And when these pointless locations have stairways, this reviewer actually found himself gnawing on the edge of the monitor in frustration.

Fossil Record

It's a great shame really, because Syberia has a good story and interesting characters and locations. Nevertheless it serves as a prime example of why Adventure gaming is so moribund. It's slow. It's frustrating. It requires near infinite patience, but while in Riven the gamer had only his own thickness to blame, in Syberia a lot of the delayed gratification is caused by dumb design, and not clever puzzles. If I was Benoit Sokal (see boxout) I'd be angry with what they did to my narrative vision. As a gamer, I'm merely asleep.

Anthony Fordham

RATING

FOR

- Atmospheric
- Strong story
- Interesting characters

AGAINST

- Interface
- Hard to see objects
- Stairways

OVERALL

An interesting and engaging story let down by an awkward interface and a fossilised pace

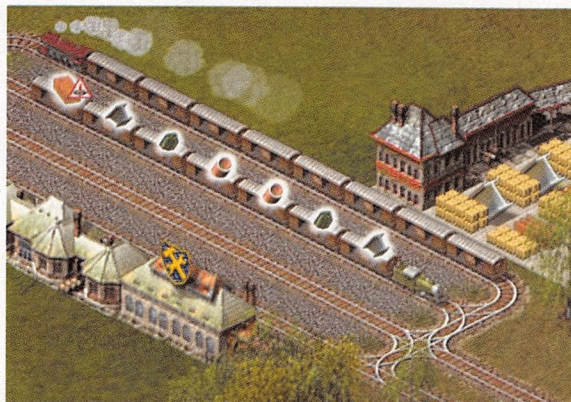
71

Industry Giant 2

Baby, you ain't stopping THIS juggernaut!

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
JoWood
PUBLISHER
JoWood
DISTRIBUTOR
Red Ant
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
G
AVAILABLE
Now



Trains... is there nothing nerdier?



Well, there's ports yes...



...and airfields...



...and fish-packing districts

SYSTEM

NEED

P2-350
64MB RAM
16MB Videocard
800MB HDD

WANT

P3-633
128MB RAM
16MB Videocard
800MB HDD

What is Industry Giant 2?

It's not easy, that's what it is. And it's big, too. But it's good. Imagine Sim City meets Red Alert (without guns) but with Railroad Tycoon thrown in. You start with money which you expend to purchase harvesters - oops - I mean mining equipment and farms while the populace go about their business. They'll expand the town if they like it, and they'll stay inside watching DVDs if they don't. You have to mine resources, build secondary industry to transform the resources into something nicer, and build shops to sell the goods. Oh, and you'll need to transport everything by road, rail, air or sea as cheaply as possible. Any errors in the supply chain and you'll pay; usually with bankruptcy.

This is not a game you play to unwind after getting home at 2 am. It requires careful digestion of the manual and the (lame) tutorials. There are three major play methods; campaign, free play and multi-player (using GameSpy, LAN or skirmish with AI).

What's in the box?

The box has a manual and two CDs (depending on where you buy it - according to the forums the number of discs can vary from one to three!). The

second CD contains screenshots, demos, videos, wallpapers, URLs for the site and forums, and a screensaver. The manual needs a technology tree desperately (only available in-game), as well as a keyboard-shortcut card (would everyone please do this!). By the way, the keyboard shortcuts didn't always work for me - the 1:4 zoom on Alt-F4 kept quitting the game for some reason...

Getting started

Campaign mode is a good place to start, but if you don't "get it" with this game then you are going to get very annoyed. Once you "get it" you will have hundreds of hours of gaming enjoyment and family annoyance. It's important to understand the basic principles and think laterally most of the time. To start with you create primary produce which can immediately be sold retail. However, to progress you must produce more sophisticated goods such as luxury motor vehicles which require iron ore, steel, oil, plastic, rubber, tyres, car bodies, leather and engines. Of course, once you've made them you need to find a market for them and sell it all at a profit. That involves strategic placement of retail outlets in cities and transport

methodology for delivery.

Goods movement is a lot of fun. You can use trucks, trains, planes and ships. The game is time-based and the actual type of transport available is dependent on the current year. You appear to reach the pinnacle of transport development in the 1980s which is a little disappointing. Container ships don't make an appearance, nor do semi-trailers, TGVs or cargo 747s.

The gameplay

Each game starts with a fairly large "world"; it might be desert, tropics, mountainous, rocky or forested or a combination. The world usually has water, and it might be a coastline with a river, an inland lake or a series of islands and mainland. Each world has particular characteristics that will influence the progress of the game. In addition to natural features, there are towns, villages, roads and natural resources.

In the campaigns your task is to establish industry and retail sales so that you are earning at a certain rate or have capital of a certain amount or both. You'll start by placing basic retail shops such as grocery stores into the city. The shops need off-site warehouses, so you'll also place one such that its



Might not look like much but they can MAKE YOU MONEY!

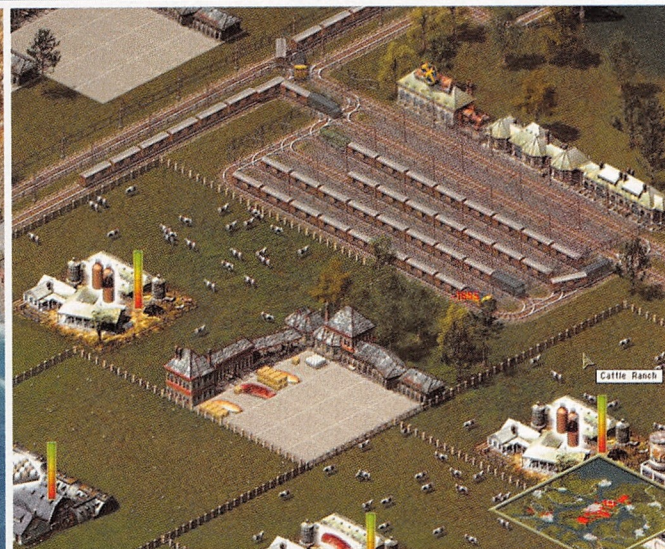
HANDY TIPS

It costs money to transport goods, and the cheapest way in the short term is by truck. The model of truck or other transport you can purchase depends on the year you're in. Often you'll have a choice between cheaper vehicles with lower reliability and higher running cost, or something quite speedy but expensive to buy and maintain. Like many choices, you need to make tradeoffs depending on how rich you are.

Trains can be steam, diesel or electric and are modelled on real locomotives. Ships and planes are also modelled on the real thing and all vehicles have some endearing elements to their representation. Ships throw up a nicely animated wake and the ocean has smoothly breaking waves, while planes in a holding pattern around your airport are pretty cool. Trains are a bit limited in track layout (no gradual curves and all intersections are T intersections) and although a station can have up to six platforms, they can only have two inbound and two outbound tracks. That can lead to congestion without careful planning. Setting up an air service is entertaining, and while planes have a large capacity they are expensive to run and slow to load and unload. Often you will find that ships are more economical, but the rail network tends to be the mainstay of any economy. The success of your network depends on good planning and keeping the trains running in an orderly fashion. Trains that meet head-on don't crash, but they slow down a lot and reduce profitability.



Welcome to the beautiful city of "The Suckers Who'll Buy Anything"



From this height the cattle look like ants! Wait... they ARE ants!

catchment area includes the shop.

The final element of the basic supply chain is something to sell in the shops! You'll often start by buying farms which produce meat, milk, fruit and eggs. The little animated cows and chickens are rather cute. The animal farms produce food year round, but crops such as wheat, hops, fruit and grapes are harvested annually. During the year the farms show their stages such as the leaves growing, flowering, fruiting and harvesting. The attention to detail is such that even the little hop plants are a reasonable facsimile of how real hops are grown.

Time passes gradually in IG2. You can stop time or speed it up so that trains and cars are animated at a phenomenal speed and two months will pass in a minute. Over time new industries, technologies and vehicles become available. The calendar shows the passage of time and you can prepare enough warehouses for harvest. If there isn't somewhere to store it, it's destroyed, and that's a waste of money.

I'm a lumberjack...

Harvesting wood and mining minerals are critical to success. You purchase logging camps, mines and oil rigs

which produce timber, minerals such as quartz, copper or iron ore, and oil. Usually you will build factories nearby to transform the goods into, say, boards, wire, steel or plastics. These will then form the basis of other products such as televisions or freezers. Of course, to sell these goods you might need a whitegoods store in the same way that you need a car dealer to sell cars or tyres.

You should try to move goods which have been processed as much as possible. You're better off harvesting timber, producing boards and making tables all in the one area before transporting the tables to the furniture store in town. However, it's not always as simple as that and you may need to make compromises. Even in free mode, where money is no object, developing the perfect industrial society requires a great deal of work. I ended up with a massive oversupply of electric motors and televisions, while lacking toys and furniture. That meant backing off on the production of copper and plastic from oil, while keeping the rubber flowing for car tyres. In addition, you need to make sure everything gets to the right place, either for sale, export or incorporation into other products. Over or

undersupply requires tweaking at several points in the supply chain without affecting other produce that may be co-dependent.

The graphics are outstanding for an isometric game (even though you can't rotate the game board) and the anti-aliasing on my GeForce3 Ti200 looked great (leave it on auto). Game play was smooth while using 100% of an Athlon 1400 with 512 Mb of RAM for the entire game. It's normal for a game to grab as much processor as possible so don't be concerned by this. Mind you, some scenarios took 2 minutes to load on this system, so don't be in a rush.

So...

Yes, it's Industry Giant, but there is a level missing here - tertiary services such as doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers and so on. You can build a university, so perhaps it could be remodelled to produce these services? Model train builders and wannabes will love this game. It requires patience, attention to detail, lots of time, a good CPU, a modern CD drive (due to the Securom copy protection) and a desire to run the world.

Andrew Calvin

RATING

FOR

- Free play mode
- Depth of technology tree
- Neat graphics

AGAINST

- No paper-based tech tree
- No tunnels
- Tech tree finishes too early

OVERALL

Very deep, very detailed, very intense. Definitely not for communists

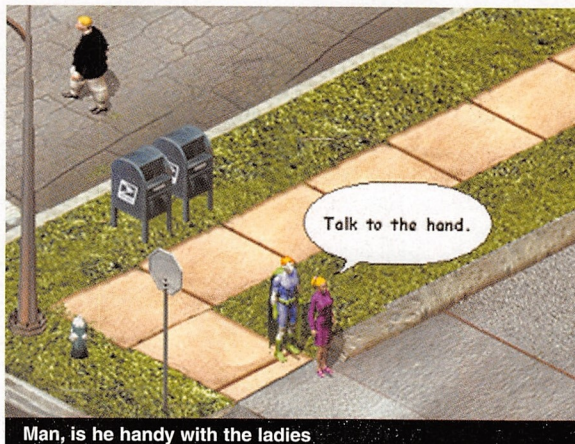
80

Hero X

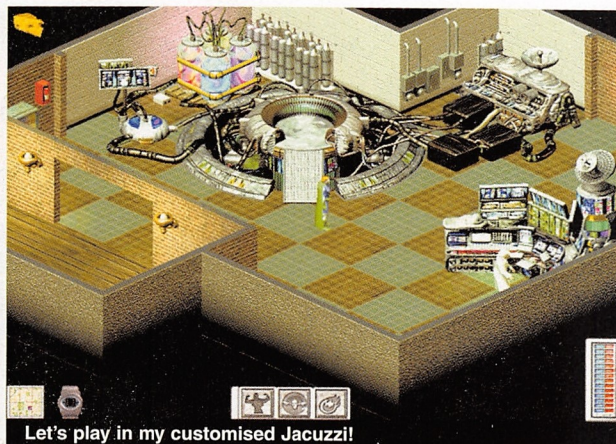
Freedom Force this ain't, but that's okay

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Amazing Games
PUBLISHER
Infogrames
DISTRIBUTOR
Infogrames
PRICE
\$49.95
RATING
M15+
AVAILABLE
Now



Man, is he handy with the ladies



Let's play in my customised Jacuzzi!

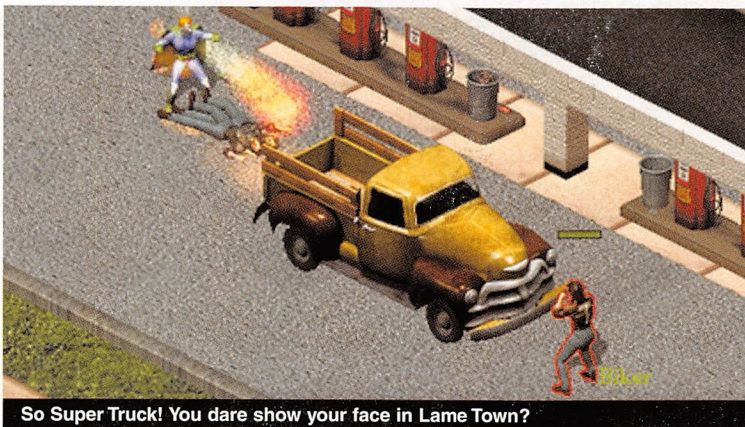
SYSTEM

NEED

P233 MMX
16MB RAM
4MB Videocard
500MB HDD

WANT

P3-450
32MB RAM
8MB Videocard
500MB HDD



So Super Truck! You dare show your face in Lame Town?

WANT SOME CHEESE WITH THAT?

Hero X adopts a very tongue-in-cheek approach to the whole superhero caper, so apart from some very corny one-liners there's the usual comic book-style "Pows" and "Bams" displayed during combat. Some of the dialogue generates a few chuckles initially, but tends to become monotonous and one-dimensional before long. Thankfully, players are able to control the level of "cheesiness". Whilst it's good to seek a game not taking its subject matter too seriously and poking fun at itself, Hero X does go a little overboard.

RATING

FOR

- Wide selection of powers
- Works on ANY machine
- Faithful to DC comics

AGAINST

- Simplistic gameplay
- Overdone humour
- Minor graphical issues

OVERALL

Hero X tries a little too hard and ends up tripping on its own cape.

68

Superheroes have it pretty

good don't they? The Hulk has the pecs and six pack. Batman has a nice set of wheels (and a plane, a chopper, and a motorbike) and a swish mansion to hang out in when he's not fighting bad guys. Superman may have to wear his underpants on the outside of his tights, but at least he has x-ray vision. Enough said. So, what about your average, two-bit superhero?

Following what seems to be a growing trend, led by the brilliant Freedom Force, Hero X is a budget superhero-themed title based on the DC and Marvel comics of the 1950s and 1960s. After creating a superhero of your choice, players are assigned by the American Super Heroes Association (ASHA) to protect the citizens of Smalltown, a quiet little burg where a fledgling superhero can earn his or her wings.

Wings?

Initial missions are fairly basic, consisting of rounding up a gang of bikies and sorting out some troublesome college lads with too much time on their hands. Having gotten their superhero boots wet with these

mundane tasks, players will later be given more interesting assignments as a horde of supervillains descend upon Smalltown. Unfortunately, even when the professional evildoers turn up, there isn't a whole lot to rave about. Gameplay essentially consists of a big hide-and-seek game as players move back and forth across Smalltown performing very similar tasks.

Travelling to different sections of Smalltown is accomplished via a street directory-style map screen. Although it is a bit on the bare side, it is easy to use. More troubling is actual movement around the main game area. There is no on-screen map to assist, and doors to building interiors (which are shaded out) are often difficult to see and not identifiable until you happen to pass your mouse over them. The frustrating overall result is plenty of retracing of the same path over and over again.

Combat is fairly simple: repeated clicks of the left mouse button for melee attacks, while the right button controls ranged attacks. Melee attacks can be varied by holding down the Shift, Ctrl, or Alt keys while superpowers of course also add spice. Players are able to select three powers at the start with over

50 to choose from as the game progresses. There are the usual assortment of telekinesis, super strength and invisibility powers, as well as other less familiar ones. There is a good balance between the superpowers, with only two or three redundant ones that have little use during actual gameplay.

So last year

Graphics are pretty much standard 2D fare with not much on offer to get excited about. Interior environments are feature-filled but the Streets of Smalltown seem deserted. A few minor glitches also pop up during gameplay. While not causing any stability problems, they were annoying nonetheless. Action is accompanied by some camp background music that, because of its monotony, is often unnoticeable.

Whilst not in the league of Freedom Force, Hero X is a serviceable superhero game that will provide some excitement for younger or budget-conscious gamers. Although there is a diverse selection of superpowers to have fun with, gameplay itself is repetitive and not very challenging. Hero X is best left for your hapless sidekick.

Derek Lee

OFP: Resistance

When too much Slavic warfare is barely enough



Bondi Lifesaver's Club - The Revenge



Tanks for the memory (You're fired again - Ed)



This is George's 'deadly' passenger bus

THE REAL STORY

Forget all that rubbish about Anna Kournikova, OFP: Resistance is actually a prequel to the events of the first game. The play takes the role of an ex-Soviet soldier leading a group of resistance fighters in an attempt to repel an impending Soviet invasion of his island. The game starts with nothing more than the player's own personal rifle, and it will be necessary to acquire equipment, weapons, and ammunition from the enemy. As the game progresses, additional equipment will be supplied from American operatives, similar to the way that the CIA trained and equipped Mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan War.

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Bohemia
PUBLISHER
Codemasters
DISTRIBUTOR
GameNation
PRICE
\$49.95
RATING
MA15+
AVAILABLE
Now

SYSTEM

NEED
Operation
Flashpoint
P2-400
64MB RAM
16MB Videocard
WANT
P4 2GHz+
512Mb RAM
64Mb GeForce2
500MB HDD

RATING

FOR
■ Tricky missions for experienced players
■ New vehicles and weapons
■ Improved graphics engine
AGAINST
■ AI still needs tweaking
■ No improvements to interface
■ Still no support for online play

OVERALL

Great expansion to a game that keeps on keeping on.

88

Life on the peaceful island of Nogova has been good. Plenty of bananas, no shortage of goats, good fishing. Too good. Yesterday the advance guard of Anna Kournikova's mechanized infantry arrived in order to secure the island for use as a secret training camp and global centre for leg waxing research. In a victory speech given from the back seat of her Rav4 Miss Kournikova praised the Nogovian people, expressing her hope that with diligence and hard work their homeland could also soon become a world leader in bikini line waxing, making it the world's number one destination for unsightly hair removal. Have you, Victor Troska, returned home to Nogova only to see it buried in foreign public hair? Hell no! (I swear to God George, one more intro like this and I... I just don't know what I might do - Ed)

Resistance is the second major expansion for Operation Flashpoint and a timely shot in the arm for the PCPP Readers' Game of the Year 2001. It puts you in a different tactical situation and forces you to play in a more thoughtful and cunning way than ever before. Why? Because as the leader of the local Nogova militia you have very

limited resources and manpower, and a big job to do.

So Bohemian darling!

Bohemia Interactive has modified the engine slightly to incorporate this new style of play so that it is now possible to easily drop and place items on the ground or in vehicles. Your forces are poorly armed and collecting weapons from fallen enemies is an important part of your long term strategy.

As commander you are always in charge, no more shirking responsibility by hiding in the ranks! So if you prefer to play as a grunt you're going to have to get used to giving orders. It would have been nice if the developers had tweaked the command interface a bit to make this easier but, they didn't. Commanding tanks in combat, for example, is still a bloody nightmare. When you tell your driver to go left it would be nice if he, you know, went left. Not too much to ask really.

There is good reason to be on the ball as commander, as you cannot waste resources. Any men that die during a mission will be missing on the next. Any weapons you or your men pick up and have at the end of a

mission will carry over in your inventory to the next. Your men will also gain in experience and ability as they complete missions. These changes make Resistance even more realistic as they force you to think like a team leader.

Gamers with low-end systems should be warned that the developer has tweaked the game engine considerably, making it prettier and also slower. The weather effects are much improved, and the terrain is detailed with more trees and building types. The new island of Nogova is more detailed than the earlier maps, but even those have benefited from the upgrade with more detailed terrain mapping and flora.

As well as the new campaign, Resistance comes with five excellent single missions and new vehicles and weapons. The silenced Uzi is a handy companion, as is the new V-80 attack chopper, and the deadly passenger bus (Huh? - Ed).

There are still a few AI problems such as unmanned M2 machine guns that draw your troops' fire like a magnet, but all things considered this is a must have expansion for OFP fans. PS: more local online servers please!

George Soropos

A320 Professional

Keep it in the air and you can have a lolly

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Phoenix
PUBLISHER
Just Flight
DISTRIBUTOR
Online
PRICE
\$115
RATING
G
AVAILABLE
Now



Don't touch that, we need it to live



Either it's a big hill or you're flying really lopsided

SYSTEM

NEED

Flight Sim 2002
P3-450
128MB RAM
16MB Videocard

WANT

AthlonXP 1500+
256MB RAM
GeForce3
400MB HDD



Complete with novelty airline liveries!

WHO STOLE MY YOKE?

Unlike many aircraft before it, the Airbus A320 (and later Airbus models) are controlled via a 'sidestick' rather than the conventional 2-handed flight yoke. The sidestick is not too dissimilar from your standard gaming joystick and allows precise control of the aircraft. The Airbus is fully automated to allow for near-complete computerised control. The pilot during a normal flight usually only utilizes the sidestick for a minute or two during takeoff and landing, however, this is necessary to ensure a safer takeoff roll and landing flare.

RATING

FOR

- Aircraft modelling
- Instrumentation
- Video and manual

AGAINST

- Expensive
- Panel not 100% functional
- It's not a real one?

OVERALL

The best single aircraft add on for FS2002. Pity it's so expensive

86

Welcome Aboard the Airbus!

Developed by Phoenix Simulations and produced exclusively for FS2002, A320 Professional features not only the A320, but the shorter A319 and longer A321 models capable of carrying a larger passenger load. Plus each model features the 'C' and 'V' engine variants for those that know (or care about) the differences, and around 35 popular airline liveries to boot. The package has all the spoils of a GMAX built model including fully animated control surfaces and virtual cockpit with working, updating instrumentation. Of course we would expect this from a title that costs around the AUD\$115 mark.

The whole setup is one of the best ever built for the simulator platform and features authentic Airbus panel graphics replicated from the real aircraft and approximately 80-85% functionality of its real counterpart. Switchable panel windows allow you to fly with the larger IFR panel or the VFR panel, allowing you to see more out the front window which is perfect for VFR flight or to nail those touchy landings. The throttle console panel provides control over thrust settings

and radio settings and relevant switches. The overhead panel allows you to set electric elements, aircraft lighting, air conditioning and much more, however, it is not as functional as I would have liked it to be. The virtual cockpit feature is, however, a real treat and allows you to enjoy the view en-route from a more realistic pilot perspective.

No air-conditioning!

The aircraft model itself handles very well and replicates the real thing to a high degree. The external aircraft visual model is basically, awesome! With a quality video card, high resolution and anti-aliasing, a screenshot of the external model can look almost as believable as a real Airbus aircraft photo. Kudos to Phoenix on this front.

The hallmark of the package, however, is the Flight Management Guidance System (FMGS) coupled with the Multi-purpose Control and Display Unit keypad (MCDU). The Airbus aircraft can be programmed via the MCDU keypad in accompaniment with the Autopilot and FMGS to virtually fly the

whole route from start to finish by itself. You can input Instrument Departure procedures, Flight Levels, Waypoints en-route, Climb/Cruise/Descent parameters, Instrument Arrival procedures and much more. The inclusion of a worldwide navigation database means you can take this bird anywhere in the world! Once mastered, the FMGS becomes an extremely valuable tool and allows you to sit back and sip coffee while enjoying the scenery passing by below (He's a different kind of gamer folks, bask in his alien light - Ed).

Tasty extras

For good measure, Just Flight has thrown in an excellent printed 100+ page manual in the box with all you need to know to get you started, as well as an 85-minute VHS video of a flight from the flight deck of a real Airbus A320. The video covers many aspects of the A320 aircraft as well as a walkthrough of the panel by the flight captain. A valuable resource on its own! I highly recommend this add-on for any FS2002 heavy jet fan.

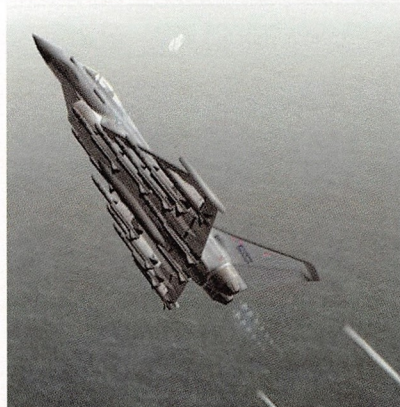
Dean Bielanowski

Operation Icebreaker

Eurofighter Typhoon just got a whole lot more frigid



Where shall I stick this?



Lie on your side and draw your knees up



Sorry Tower! Uh... Tower?



I didn't do it

ACTION VS STORYLINE?



Most will argue that including a storyline in a simulation game is

essential to set the scene for ongoing missions and to give the title 'atmosphere'. Others may say that running through boring storyline sequences or text is a waste of potential flight time. These simmers just want to jump in and fly! Some simmers buy a title just to play online multiplayer and never even play the offline missions. So should a simulation have a storyline component? After all, if it is indeed a 'simulation', shouldn't the story be created 'on the fly' rather than follow a pre-conceived path? Fair enough for historical simulations, but would the extra time, effort and disk space spent on cut scenes and these pre-conceived storylines be better spent on more missions and opportunities for extended game play? (Dude what are you saying? Did you like the story or not? Me, I liked the bit where they interrogated the female pilot in her underwear. Mmmn, military issue! - Ed)

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
DID
PUBLISHER
Rage
DISTRIBUTOR
Activision
PRICE
\$49.95
RATING
M15+
AVAILABLE
Now

SYSTEM

NEED
P3-667
64MB RAM
16MB Videocard
WANT
AthlonXP 1500+
256MB RAM
32MB GeForce2

There's enough real-world terrorism going on at the moment right? Well, popular game and simulation developer, DID, has decided to throw in a little more with 'Operation Icebreaker', the latest add-on to the futuristic fighter combat simulation, Eurofighter Typhoon. The original game was based in the year 2015, and basically revolved around a plan to protect Iceland from a Russian invasion. In Operation Icebreaker, you are taken further into this rather unlikely scenario and find yourself having to attack Iceland, now fully overrun by Russian forces. To make things worse (of course), the Russians are secretly developing 'ultimate weapons' of mass destruction. Not only that, but six of your best buddies also require rescuing. Didn't their mums ever tell them not to drive a fighter jet half hammered?

Stingy stingy

Operation Icebreaker adds 15 new missions to the default arsenal. DID has generously included the original game with the new missions, which is something we like to see, but stuffed it all into a DVD-style case with the 137-

page strategy guide in only in electronic PDF format, something most of us do not like to see! Instead of a proper manual, we only get a printed 12-page 'Quick Reference Guide'. However, all in all it makes for a good value purchase if you do not already own the original Eurofighter Typhoon release.

The new missions are all carrier-based allowing for more challenging gameplay. Trying to drop a Typhoon capable of speeds past Mach 2 on a chunk of moving metal is certainly no walk in the park, especially in bad weather, which by the way, has been beefed up in this version. Missions become increasingly challenging.

As in the original, the same method of navigation and crew management is in place. You can freely switch between crew members to assess their current situation and take control of their mission, assuming you have rescued them first of course. A good mix of air-to-air and air-to-ground missions can be flown and as you penetrate further into the enemy stronghold, you can expect to be flooded with an array of opposing forces, AAA fire and a few dozen AA missiles chasing your tail looking to turn

your multi-million dollar warbird into scrap metal. Recycling at its worst!

Pants tres bien!

The new Gold Pack also features improved compatibility with Windows XP and new multiplayer modes for pilots who like to earn themselves the Top Gun award against other Sierra Hotel jocks online. Support for joystick throttles is now available.

The game still seems to lack that high level of graphical detail and rendering we would expect in a modern combat simulator. It certainly has some nice effects, but clouds, rain and terrain modeling (in particular), are still very basic compared to what is around now and what has been produced roughly around the same period the host platform was created. The flight physics and general fighter simulation is commendable, though there is always room for improvement.

Fans of the original who need more missions should grab this version, otherwise leave it on the shelf and wait for Ubisoft's Lock On: Modern Air Combat due early next year.

Dean Bielanowski

RATING

FOR
■ Carrier-based operations
■ Enhanced weather effects
■ Includes original game

AGAINST
■ Only 15 extra missions
■ No printed manual!
■ Low graphical detail

OVERALL

Adds much more to the original game but a little too dated to attract new fans

78

Schumacher KART 2002

Powerslides and lawnmower engines feature heavily

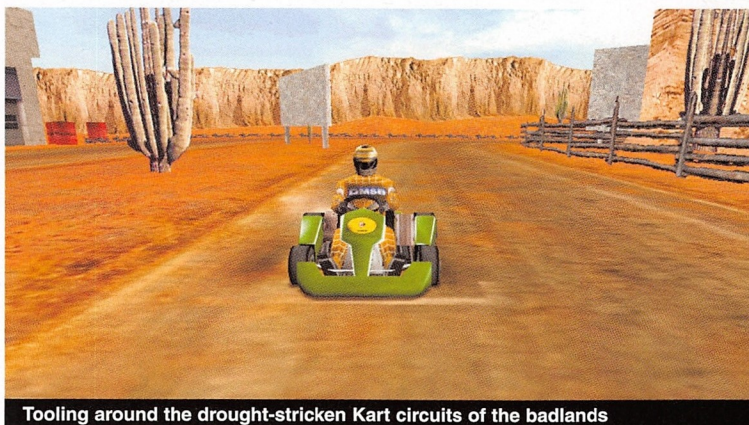
DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Paraworld
PUBLISHER
Red Ant
DISTRIBUTOR
Red Ant
PRICE
\$69.95
RATING
G
AVAILABLE
Now



SYSTEM

NEED
P3-450Mhz
16MB Videocard
64MB RAM
380MB HDD
WANT
800Mhz+ CPU
32MB Videocard
128MB RAM
Joystick/Wheel



FULL BODY CONDOM?

KART 2002 supports force feedback that is quite good - and has especially genuine 'road-grip' forces - but current FF technology lacks the nerve-jarring vibrations that travel through the steering wheel of real-life go-karts. Part of the whole appeal of karting is the driver's proximity to the road - you're right down there with your knees apart and the tarmac flashing past your elbow at 60kph. But on PC, the experience is somewhat deadened. Perhaps the Reality GP racing frame (see page 96) could enhance this game a little.

RATING

FOR

- Realistic physics
- Diverse tracks
- Undemanding specs

AGAINST

- Too simple
- Limited options
- Karting ain't all that

OVERALL

Even the fastest and most furious go-karting isn't really that fast (or furious)

68

Racing a fifteen horsepower vehicle with no gearbox, five-inch wheels and better fuel economy than a Honda civic (not to mention a comparable top-speed) might not be everyone's idea of a ball-tearing, crazy good time. Nevertheless, some people presumably get a kick out of it, else the good people at Paraworld wouldn't have thought to turn it into a video game. The resulting Michael Schumacher KART 2002 is a light-hearted and enjoyable - albeit somewhat limited - arcade racing game.

As far as game diversity goes, KART 2002 is a mundane affair, possessing only the all-too-familiar driving modes of Practise, Time Trial and Championship. As you progress through the game, new go-kart classes and new tracks are unlocked, although it doesn't take much playing time to complete everything the game has to offer. There are nine tracks in all, and three different class of go-karts.

Cut the grass on your way up

Each class of go-kart uses a different 3D model, unique sound effects, and noticeably changed driving physics.

However, this is hardly eye-popping news, as there are only three different kart classes, but it does add a little diversity to the title.

Despite the limited kart-models, KART 2002 does showcase some fairly nice visuals. As with most modern games, the graphics can be tweaked to suit your system, and the good news is that you won't need a supercomputer to run them smoothly in a high resolution. The graphics engine encompasses dynamic skid marks, lens-flare and impressive shadowing, but won't stress low-end PCs.

KART 2002 blends an arcade game style with quite authentic go-kart physics, making for a realistic game that's easy and enjoyable at the same time. The in-game karts drive and respond realistically, which allows for cool 'snap-slides' around corners, as well as a fast-paced racing experience. There is no damage model at all, but this can be somewhat forgiven, as cart wheeling, car-shredding pile-ups are hardly a regular occurrence in the world of go-karting.

As in real life, the go-karts in the game do not possess gearboxes, but

realistic as this is, combined with the lack of a damage model and any weather-effects, it does limit the driving experience to the basics, and go-kart driving is pretty basic stuff to begin with. As a result, KART 2002 can quickly become monotonous, and if you're not a huge karting fan the game does little to engage you into this highly specialised motor sport.

I'll stick to my Tamiya TGX

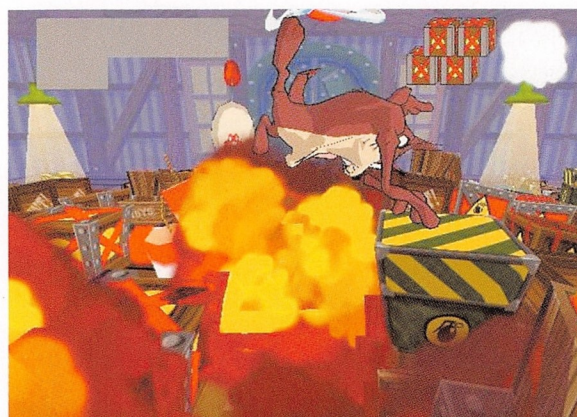
Thankfully, the tracks are, for the most part, interesting, unique and challenging, which makes the racing a little bit more exciting. There are indoor and outdoor tracks, all of which are rendered nicely, with noticeably vibrant colours and unique details.

Michael Schumacher KART 2002 fails to stand out in any particular way, although it would be harsh to describe the title as anything less than average. If there is such a thing as a 'hardcore go-karting fan', one would guess that they may find extra value in KART 2002. For everyone else, my advice is to save smashing the piggy bank for a 'real' racing sim, like GP4.

Victor Webster

Taz wanted

Infogrames draws a Blanc!



Blew his guts open! No wait, that's just his mouth



Light on his feet, and a total devil in bed



Thing is, it doesn't look ANYTHING like a Tasmanian Devil



Uglier than Paul Noone, DVD God

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Infogrames
PUBLISHER
Infogrames
DISTRIBUTOR
GameNation
PRICE
\$49.95
RATING
G
AVAILABLE
Now

SYSTEM

NEED
PIII 550
128MB RAM
32MB Video Card
700MB HDD
WANT
PIII/Athlon 1Ghz
256MB RAM
32MB Video Card
700MB HDD

RATING

FOR
■ 3D platformer for PC
■ Lots of chuckle worthy animations
■ Can be played in short bursts
AGAINST
■ Cel-shading a bit weak
■ Very frustrating and difficult
■ Needs a gamepad to play effectively

OVERALL

Suited to young players, or those looking for a trip down memory lane turned into a hard journey.

71

Once upon a time a long time ago there was more to games than just big budget 3D engines and the eradication of all and sundry within each level. There were more toon style games that placed emphasis on exploration, puzzle solving and good old fashioned joystick/gamepad jump and run platforming. Taz Wanted addresses this and brings 3D platform action puzzle solving back to our PCs.

Graphically Taz Wanted makes good use of cel-shading (a 3D rendering methodology that paints objects in a style so that they resemble cartoons) and the familiar characters resemble their on-screen counterparts. Like the toon it emulates, Taz Wanted is bright, colourful and being 3D has fluid and numerous animations. A graphical criticism is that the characters have a solid, jaggy outline around them so they stand out more. The outline is polygonal based and not anti-aliased in any way so is somewhat ugly. Turning the outline off made the models look more washed out putting you in a damned if you do, damned if you don't situation. Sonically, Taz Wanted features plenty of cartoony

sounds and voices sound surprisingly close to the Mel Blanc originals.

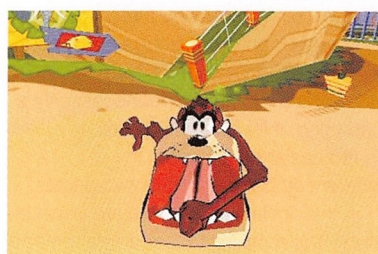
Essentially Taz Wanted is a 3D platformer/puzzle game where you're placed in a free-roaming environment with your task to solve a series of objectives placed around the map. The puzzles however raise a curious question about the game, who is it for? With all the cartoon shenanigans a young audience is the obvious target but the challenges are particularly difficult and require some very precise gamepad twitch skills to succeed. Failure is a common and frustrating element that's alleviated slightly with unlimited lives and a quick return to the point just before failure. The paradox is that despite the frustration of failing an objective for the hundredth time your goal is often quite clear (when they aren't the map screen's Hint function gives clarity) creating a particularly addictive component that brings balance to the frustration.

As Taz you can walk, tip-toe, jump (which often causes him to fart) or zoom off with his famous tornado manoeuvre. Littered around the level are objects that can be eaten and

then spat out at enemies. As you can only hold one item in your mouth, it's a case of lining up the target and firing then rushing through while it's stunned. Other one shot weapons are hidden around the levels as well as a telephone booth that disguises Taz and gives him one extra stun ability. Controlling Taz can be very clumsy, even with a gamepad. An Xbox type controller would be perfect as you really need one thumb-stick for the camera and another to move with.

Taz Wanted is an entertaining 3D puzzle platformer that with plenty of colour and sproingy sounds should really appeal to a young audience but due to its difficulty may end up being shelved early. Additional multiplayer on the same machine helps extend its life.

Jere Lawrence



Starmageddon

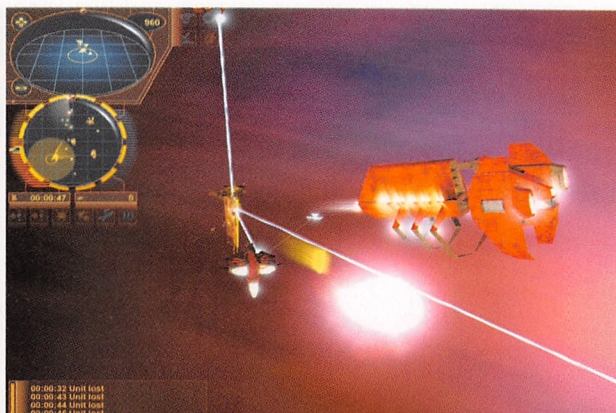
Where are the Homeworlds of yesteryear?

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Lemon Interactive
PUBLISHER
Lemon Interactive
DISTRIBUTOR
Red Ant
PRICE
\$79.95
RATING
M15+
AVAILABLE
Now



Look out to the enemy approach Wildstar!



Long live Leader Desslok!

SYSTEM

NEED

P3-700
256MB RAM
32MB video
1.2GB HDD

WANT

AthlonXP 1GHz+
256MB RAM
64Mb videocard
1.2GB HDD



There are only 318 days left to save Earth!

STARBLAZERS

This mid-eighties sci-fi Japanese cartoon serial graced our TV sets all too briefly in the afternoons. Take a spaceship. Then fly it to the distant planet of Iscandar to recover a special artefact that can save Earth from the deadly radiation of the Gamilon Planet Bombs. Did we mention that the ship, known as the Argo in the English version, has an enormous weapon at the front called the Wave Motion Gun that gets fired no less than once an episode, saving the day? And that the ship's nurse frequently flashes her underwear, albeit unwittingly? What does this have to do with Starmageddon? Who cares!

RATING

FOR

- More 3D space action for Homeworld fans
- Multiple battlefields
- Great audio

AGAINST

- Visuals should be better
- Interface lacking
- Only ten missions per side

OVERALL

A good attempt to clone Homeworld, but something has gone awry resulting in a mutant

70

Seems like you can't swing a cat in deep space without pissing someone off. There we were, about to colonise our third planet, when a strange Earth-bound comet suddenly appeared. A Trojan comet, hiding the Daemons, a guerrilla Country & Western band from the dark side of Uranus. They'd already shaken up the disabled line dancing circuit around Ursa Major and obviously saw Earth as easy pickings. When country music was banned on Earth in the mid 21st century we all thought we'd seen the last of it but now, all humanity lies trembling in fear (Ah George, your ability to capture a game's plot in a few scant sentences is nothing short of poetic - Ed).

Given the Games Industry's Hollywood style penchant for copying and flogging to death anything new and successful it's surprising that Starmageddon is the first game cloned from Relic's innovative RTS title Homeworld. But this is not necessarily a bad thing, if it's been done well.

It's easier to talk about the differences between these two games than the similarities as there are fewer of them. The most important difference and

biggest problem with the game design is the interface. Homeworld's interface was pretty close to perfect, so why change anything? Starmageddon has very similar controls but for some reason the game designers left out some key elements such as the ability to use formations and defend/escort orders.

Not being able to put a fighter escort on harvesters makes them extremely vulnerable and dictates the nature of multiplayer gaming (get the other guy's harvesters) It also adds an unnecessary extra step when in combat whereby you have to order ships to attack incoming enemies instead of being able to rely on their standing orders to defend whatever they are escorting. Of course you can group units together as in any RTS but leaving out a design element that makes the players task more enjoyable seems rather silly when Starmageddon copies so much else.

Formations are controlled by the AI; if you group units together ships will move into sensible formations and attack. This lack of tactical control does however lead to a situation where most scenarios are won by attrition or by the correct use of the proper class of craft,

rather than clever positioning of forces and tactical manoeuvring.

One major departure from Starmageddon's ancestry comes from being able to fight on multiple battlefields at the same time. Up to three motherships are at your disposal in some situations; however the need to micromanage the protection of harvesters and other ships means that looking after three battlefields at once very soon becomes a bloody great pain in the asteroid belt.

On a superficial level Starmageddon looks quite nice and sounds great. But when you take a look at the minimum specs (256 RAM, 32Mb Video) it should actually look a lot better. Close up, ship textures are mostly ugly and blurred, and many of the designs are too similar to Homeworld vessels.

This is extremely derivative of Homeworld, right down to the menu structure, interface and mission design. If you loved Homeworld you probably won't think that's negative however there are some considerable flaws in the execution of Starmageddon that should lead you to think twice about buying it.

George Soropos

Mobile Forces

Subtitled "When Forces go Mobile"



If only Schumacher's Cart 2002 had been like this...



Check out the sick job I've done on my Civic mate



Ah yes, New Eeloch, where only the coolest ricers go

IF YOU REALLY MUST...

Whilst MF's focus is clearly on multiplayer, it does offer a singleplayer mode. Players are teamed with a single bot to start with and earn new teammates and open new levels after completing a set number of missions. While orders can be issued to AI teammates, they are effectively limited to "attack there", "defend here" and "figure it out yourself". Competing against bots doesn't really offer much decent offline training. Even semi-veteran gamers will make quick mincemeat of the bots, even on their highest skill setting. Don't bother wasting too much time in Nigel-no-friends mode

DETAILS

DEVELOPER
Real Time Worlds
PUBLISHER
Rage
DISTRIBUTOR
Activision
PRICE
\$69.95
RATING
MA15+
AVAILABLE
Now

SYSTEM

NEED
P2-350
32MB RAM
8MB Videocard
500MB HDD

WANT
Athlon 1100
64MB RAM
32MB GeForce2
500MB HDD

Sick and tired of running around yet another FPS game, gunning down bad guys? Ever thought to yourself, "Damn, I wish I had me an APC and three heavily armed comrades to wreak some havoc?" Well, look no further. With Mobile Forces, it can be party time, all the time.

MF is a multiplayer-focused FPS that differentiates itself from generic FPS titles by adding a few new gameplay elements that, thankfully, have more than just gimmick value. It runs on the Unreal Tournament engine, which essentially guarantees that the action is fast and smooth. However, whilst the feature-filled environments are a treat to look at, character and weapon models seem to have been overlooked, appearing blocky and shapeless.

Bland Forces?

Apart from the usual Deathmatch and Capture the Flag options, MF introduces several new game modes, all of which play exceedingly well. One, titled "Detonation", has all players fitted with an electronic collar armed with explosives. The objective

is to find a key hidden somewhere on the level, transport it to the opposing base, and then use it to detonate the collars of your opponents.

MF would not be deserving of its name if it didn't offer the ability to hoon about in a range of some seriously fun vehicles. There are four to choose from: buggy, Hum-Vee, truck, and APC. All are able to carry additional teammates who can stand and shoot or operate mounted weaponry, adding a new mobile firepower dimension. MF could have easily become a wildly unbalanced, vehicle-oriented FPS. Thankfully, it isn't. Vehicles are subject to damage and sharpshooting players will be glad to know that drivers can be picked off, or tyres shot off, making for some spectacular crashes.

The vehicles will be put to good use as the maps are all massive in scale. More importantly, their design is first-rate and varied enough to cater for all playing types, regardless of whether close combat room-to-room fighting or frenetic open slather is your preference. In fact, it's hard to find fault with any of the 11 standard maps

that range in diversity from a ghetto to a polar research facility. There's even a map based on a setting from an old Spaghetti Western.

Pea-shooter Forces?

Where MF unfortunately comes unhinged is in the weapons department. While the unimaginative selection fails to spark much excitement, the real problem is that the M-16 assault rifle and rocket launcher are the only ones worth using. Players who favour the sniper rifle will be sadly disappointed by its lack of stopping power, with three or four shots generally required for a kill, rendering it pretty much useless.

Mobile Forces will no doubt be an online and LAN favourite as it registers big fat ticks next to the all-important trio of map design, variety in play modes, and fast gameplay. It even adds a nice bonus with its use of vehicular action. Players looking for a new multiplayer FPS to conquer and who don't get bored using the same weapons will be content for quite some time.

Derek Lee

RATING

FOR

- Exceptional map design
- Clever, new play modes
- Vehicles add variety

AGAINST

- Weak, unbalanced weapon selection
- Average single player mode
- Substandard character models

OVERALL

An above average FPS that falls just short of greatness due to poor weapons options.

83



matrox **Parhelia**™
High Fidelity Graphics™



Immerse yourself in High Fidelity Graphics



Introducing, Matrox Parhelia™! - Integrating an unprecedented number of groundbreaking technologies into the world's first 512-bit graphics processing unit (GPU), Matrox Parhelia delivers the highest-fidelity graphics for a truly immersive visual experience. The engineering vision guiding Matrox Parhelia is to achieve the highest fidelity graphics with the truest representation of color, 3D, text and images. A source of unparalleled quality, excellent performance and the widest range of innovative features, Matrox Parhelia is designed to bring outstanding graphics quality to professional users and PC enthusiasts. If you want the ultimate visual experience, get a Matrox Parhelia and immerse yourself in high-fidelity graphics.

512-bit GPU	128 MB	256-bit DDR	Triple-RGB, Dual-DVI and TV output	High performance 2D, 3D & video	Surround Gaming	10-bit GigaColor	AGP 4X
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Microsoft® Flight Simulator 2002

Unparalleled visual **quality:**

- 10-bit GigaColor Technology
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- 36-Stage Shader Array

Distinct innovative **features:**

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- Surround Gaming
- DualHead®-HF
- TripleHead Desktop Mode
- PowerDesk-HF Utility Suite



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IN REVIEW

Stuff you need to make your box the Beast

HARDWARE

For those thirsty for knowledge, this month's tech feature is on the seldom discussed aspect of the modern videocard - Vertex and Pixel shaders. These two functions have the ability to completely revolutionise our gaming but due to reasons unknown are rarely utilised by developers. Still, you can impress your friends by being a font of video knowledge from what you'll learn in this feature.

It is a great time for videocards as SIS re-enter the scene with its latest chipset the Xabre Pro. It's not going to set the graphics world on fire but does make for much-needed competition in a now thin industry giving buyers on a budget something else to consider besides the G4 MX440. Taking on the high end market we continue our coverage of the Matrox Parhelia which although not as fast as the nVIDIA Ti products, it is an amazing card nonetheless.

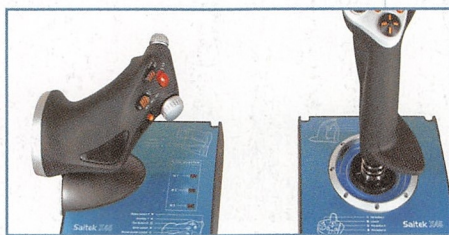
Since Intel got its act together with the release of the quite affordable P4B, even more motherboard manufacturers have opted to develop a solution and we add two more boards to our list of reviews. AMD options still abound and the Soyo KT333 board offers yet another choice for the AMD fan.

Hungry for power? Asher outdid himself when he looked at the Antec 550W PSU. Power supplies, they're not necessarily the most exciting things to review but in true PCPP style no capacitor was left unchecked and he even went as far as hooking up a custom built device to strain the unit. Such dedication.

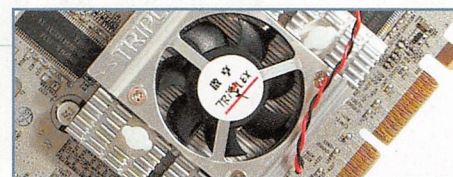
But wait, there's more. The Media XP is a front panel hub that conveniently relocates the fiddly ports on the back of our PCs and the new ASUS 48-speed writer impressively takes burning to new heights. WOOT! Gone are the days of watching a video until your burn operation is complete.

Altec's latest speakers bring the joys of 5.1 surround sonics to our acute gaming ears and the Zippy cordless keyboard does everything in its power to inhibit accurate typing. The Saitek X45 throttle and stick underwent rigorous waggle tests but by far one of the niftiest pieces of tech we got to play with was the Reality Systems racing frame. Completely designed and developed right here in this country it's 100% Australian, just like this magazine.

Jere Lawrence
Deputy Editor
jere@next.com.au



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- ASUS 48x CDRW
- 95 Zippy Keyboard
- Altec Lansing Speakers
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- Saitek Joystick/Throttle



Jason Bargwana from the Valvoline Cummings Team Commodore cuts loose!

THE PCPP TECHNICAL AWARDS SYSTEM



The Power Award is given to the highest performing product in each PowerTest. We don't take into account the cost of the component, or what extra functionality it might have. We just look for raw power.



The Value Award is given in the PowerTest each month to the product that offers the best balance between performance and cost. It also takes into account any extras that come with the product.



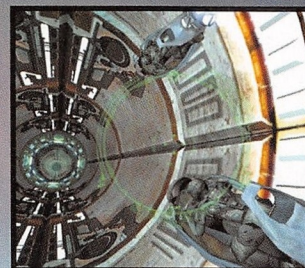
In our definitive Hotware reviews, any product deemed revolutionary, of exemplary value, or simply so cool it's a must-have, will receive a score above 90%, and the coveted PC PowerPlay Gold award.

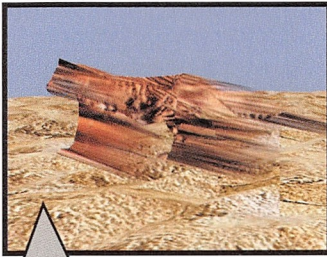
THE PCPP HARDWARE RATINGS SYSTEM

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 90+ | Excellent, Gold Award. A must buy. |
| 80-89 | Worthy product, which is hard to fault. May be slightly lacking in extra features, value or performance. |
| 60-79 | Competent product, significantly behind the State of the Art. |
| 40-59 | Mediocre with little to recommend it. |
| 0-39 | A dog. Avoid. |
| Distributor | The local point of contact for the product. |
| Price | The RRP at the time of going to print. |
| URL | Where to find further relevant information. |

Hardware Vertex Pixel Shaders

DirectX 8.1 has been around for quite some time now, yet surprisingly the much lauded feature set is barely to be seen in any of our games - even modern ones. Perhaps developers are more budget conscious than they once were or just can't be bothered. Perhaps even the install base of DX8.1 video cards out there in gamer land is too small to warrant the added costs of development. Whatever the reason, with the coming of DirectX 9 and an entirely new set of features and rendering methodologies such as Hardware Displacement Mapping you have to wonder if the API isn't getting a little ahead of itself.





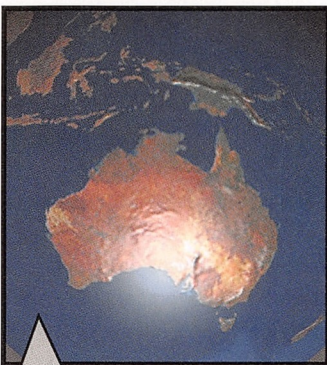
Motion blurring

In this image, as explained in the article, using the vertex shader, the tiger model has been stretched from the previous frame to the current frame and the trailing pixels are alpha blended giving them translucency to make it look like the tiger is moving really fast.

Vertex and Pixel shaders are the successors of the T&L (transformation and lighting) engine that provided geometrical processing of vertices and offered significant visual improvements for the games that support it. Hopefully with the ever constant release of titles we will see vertex and pixel shading feature more prominently. For now, let's take a look at these two prime characteristics of the modern 3D accelerator and see just what it is we're missing out on.

Vertex Shaders

In order to understand Vertex Shading it is important to define specifically what a vertex is. As 99% of all modern games are rendered in 3D, the objects, whether monsters or players, need to be constructed out of a series of polygons. Technically, a polygon is a many sided object but in our



I love a bumpy country, a land of sweeping textures

The advantages of an environment map combined with a bump map are effectively displayed in this image with mountain ranges that have depth. Notice how the ridges seem more defined where the light source hits the map - this is the effect of the underlying RGB colour map.

world of 3D it's simply a triangle and the vertex is the point at which any angle intersects. The most primitive representation of a 3D object is not actually wireframe 3D (an unfilled, untextured model) but rather the plotting of each point, or vertex of the object. To illustrate this see figure 1 (next page) where I have plotted a simple triangle. The plotting of each point (e.g. 1, 1 3, 1 3, 3) is a vertex. To create a wireframe image it's then just a matter of drawing a line between each point. The power of a vertex becomes apparent when you look at figure 2. Here the triangle has been effectively doubled by doing nothing more than adding 2 to $x[2]$ and $y[3]$ ($x[2]+2$, $y[3]+2$). The right angle triangle is now twice its size and all with a minimum of effort.

The above example was only a simple one and in the complex world of 3D graphics a vertex is more than just a plotted point. The reality is that attached to each vertex is the triangle's (or polygon's) colour, weight, fogging level and texture co-ordinates (up to 4 levels with quad-texturing capable cards) and all calculations are the responsibility of the vertex shader hardware.

In a nutshell, Vertex shaders take the mathematical processor load from the CPU and move it to the GPU (Graphical Processor Unit). Vertex shading is still possible without a compatible graphics card but the mathematics must be calculated by your CPU which significantly degrades performance. Besides wouldn't we as gamers prefer our CPUs to be processing more advanced AI and leaving the graphics to our accelerators? Thought so.

Skeletal Animation

A prime use of the Vertex Shader is with boned animation. As a developer could you imagine trying to animate an object with over 5000 polygons? The amount

of effort and calculations required to just move an arm is staggering. The answer to this difficult problem is through skeletal animation. In this procedure animators do not animate a model's individual vertices, but rather animate a bone-structure of a model. Associating a list of bones and a weight per used bone with every vertex translates the bone-structure animation into a per-vertex animation. What this amounts to is if a developer wants to move an arm, he need only move a single vertex to the destination and the hardware vertex shader will move all the polygons associated with the "bone".

The result is a model that's easier to animate and one which allows for non-linear animated reactions. Although motion capture is still a particularly fluid and highly usable style, it will only repeat the same animation over and over - get hit by a bullet and your character will repeat the same animation. Alternatively, under a dynamic vertex shader assisted animation, a developer could move the boned vertex based on where the player character gets hit - get hit in the stomach and double over, get hit in the shoulder and your character will accurately twist from the impact. Although we may have to wait for our processors to get much faster to compute the physics there's no reason why games won't feature objects that react dynamically and realistically. Soldier of Fortune III anyone?

Morphing

Another significant bonus in animating an object with the Vertex shader is that it can Morph between a source and destination object. Not only does this process work well in tandem with skeletal animation, but it promises some amazingly life-like effects in our games. To animate a dolphin swimming for example, forget motion capture, the developer needs only to render a beginning and end vertex list and the hardware vertex shader using skeletal animation can generate the frames in between. Take a look at the dolphin screenshots and



Crinkly Crinkles

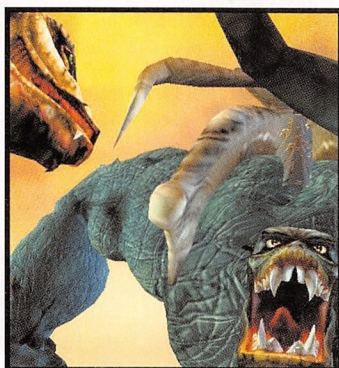
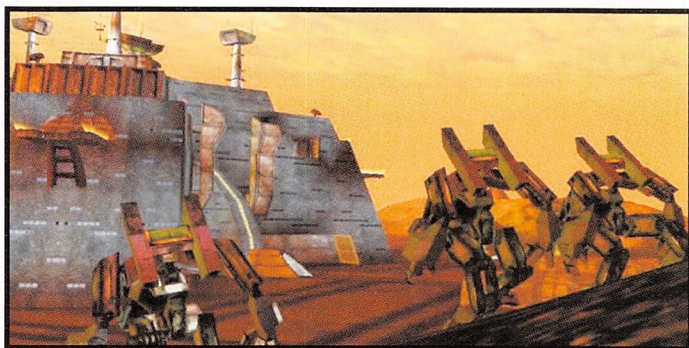
Notice the incredible amount of detail in the bump mapped logo - there's a lot happening. The object (which is completely warpable with the Vertex shader) has a bump map and environment texture added to give the effect of a crinkly surface.

you can see the morph graduation between the first and last object. Remember, all frames of animation between the beginning and end are rendered entirely by the vertex shader and the number of frames to render from beginning to end is entirely configurable by the coder.

Motion blurring

A really cool effect that's often used by Hollywood, particularly when the effect of fast speed is required is motion blurring. This was supposed to be one of the big functions of the Voodoo 5 with 3dfx proclaiming it as the next best 3D rendering technique, but now that it's accessible through DirectX/OpenGL with the assistance of the vertex shader nothing is utilising it. Admittedly GTA3 featured a type of primitive full screen motion blurring but it was subtle and not object based.

Adding a little insult to injury, it's actually quite easy to create a motion blurred effect. Essentially, the model is stretched from the previous frame to the current frame and then alpha blending (translucency) is added to the trailing pixels. A good example of this is the effect used to show the Enterprise warping in Star Trek 2 when the light of the warp nacells is left behind the ship when it goes to faster than light speeds. This same technique of stretching and blurring is also quite useful to create the effect of fur as can be seen in the screenshot of the before and after tiger.



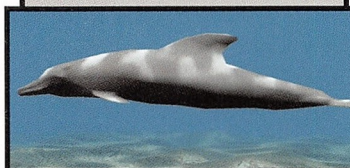
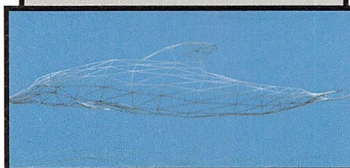
Pixel Shaders

So far we've discovered that vertex shaders affect the object at a polygonal level but the final output of any 3D graphics hardware is pixels. Depending on the resolution, in excess of 2 million pixels may need to be rendered, lit, shaded, and coloured. Utilising its own custom hardware to calculate complex mathematical manipulations, the pixel shader is a programmable processor that handles computations completely

independently of the CPU. Its function is to alter each pixel on the screen according to the parameters sent to it and to create lighting and other custom shading effects at the pixel level.

Unlike Vertex Shaders however, there is no feasible way of emulating this process in software. Using pixel shaders on graphics hardware that doesn't support it; the entire graphics pipeline has to run in software and causes performance to degrade 100 times!

Vertex shader lighting example



This wireframe image of the dolphin from the morphing example shows how the vertex shader stores colour and lighting information for different vertices. With the addition of an environment map thanks to the pixel shader the rendered dolphin model now has the appearance of something lit under water.

Bump mapping

Bump mapping is a prime function of the pixel shader and is used to create the illusion of additional geometry in an object by creating the impression of bumps or variations in surface depth. (See the crinkly NVIDIA logo and the raised mountains from the earth shot). Currently there are a number of different bump mapping methodologies, the most modern being Dot3 which is the preferred method for developers, well, those that actually bother to include any kind of bump mapping in their games.

The reason why we need dedicated hardware for bump mapping is because it's an extremely computationally intensive process and one bump mapped object (in the case of Dot3) requires up to four textures to be applied to the object to

render the desired result. Although it is possible to render 4 textures to an object on any video card, unless it can do some serious multi-texturing it's going to be way too slow. For this reason most gamers are going to need a GeForce 3/4 or an ATI Radeon video card to utilise the feature set. (Note: Both cards feature programmable pixel shaders so can render custom made effects through DirectX 8.1).

A video card needs to be able to render 4 textures at once for Dot3 bump mapping because the process involves the layering of different texture types to communicate what is happening in the virtual world.

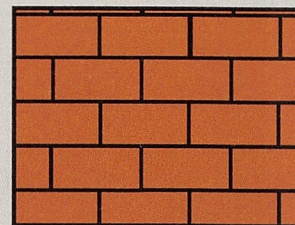
Starting with a base wireframe object the first process is to apply the actual base texture which gives the object its substance. The next step involves a greyscale bump map texture being added which represents the bumps and rough surfaces of the object. Like hardware displacement mapping (see Issue 77) the greyscale texture represents height. White is a high point, black is a low point. Next an RGB colour map is applied to the object and its purpose is to define what happens when a light is shined on the surface. Although a texture, it isn't necessarily a visible part of the object and is effectively transparent until a light source is used. When virtual light hits the virtual object the RGB colour map is integrated to the texturing process and gives the effect of added shadowing. Realistically though, the bumps aren't actually rendering real shadows but rather are using the RGB map to imply a change of light refraction through the integration of another texture. Finally, an environment map (for lighting effects) is combined to the bump and RGB map to become a perturbed environment map and the object is now ready to be rendered.

Cel-Shading.

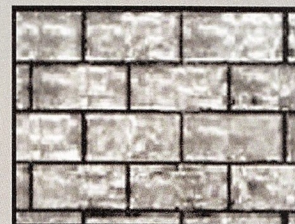
Best described as the "art" of rendering objects to look like cartoons it's named because of the cell process used in the

Texture stages involved with bump mapping

Base Texture



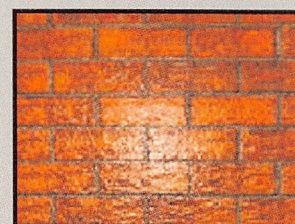
Bump Map



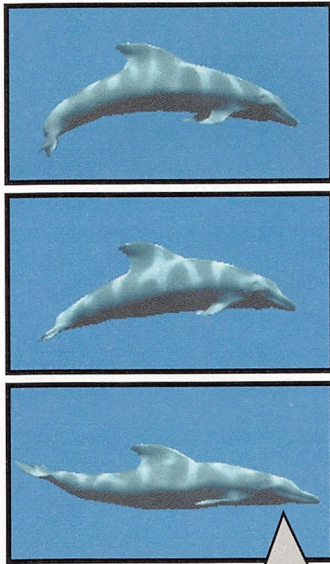
RGB Colour Map



Final Render



animation industry. Any hand drawn animation starts as a series of penned images that eventually are traced onto sheets of plastic called cells. At this point the individual sheets are painted and made ready for final shooting. The 3D version of this has nothing to do with the animation process but the results are the same. On a PC, the process involves a standard 3D object, an environment map and a 1 dimensional light-map to create shading on the object. Games such as Dragons Lair 3D and Taz use this effect perfectly. Once again due to the need for high levels of multi-texturing a pixel shader is required to render the process smoothly.

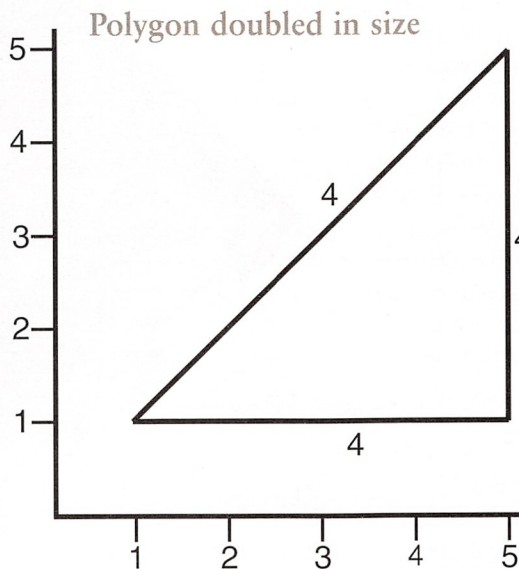
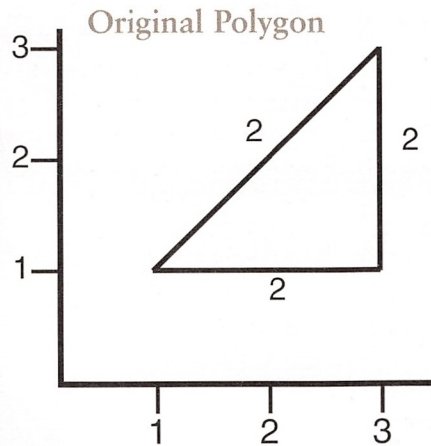


Vertex Morphing

The initial image shows the dolphin at the beginning of the animation with the other 2 frames demonstrating the effect of morphing a vertex between a source and destination object. The dolphin moves fluidly and is generated real time by the vertex shader.

Shadow mapping

Finally, another exciting effect that can be produced by the Pixel shader is shadow mapping. Only just a few years ago when developers wanted to cast real-time shadows they essentially had to copy the object, transpose it to a 2D map then attach it to the base model. Sort of like having toilet paper permanently stuck to your shoe that you'd have to drag around. Not only did the developer have to write this code himself but complex shadows that crept up walls or across vertices were way out of the question. (Good examples of these kinds of simple shadows are featured in Quake III Arena). Shadow mapping, a complete feature of the pixel shader allows the developer to write a small program that runs from the video cards GPU and creates shadows completely independently of the processor - WOOT! If you're a bit of a naysayer and think shadows are a waste of power then play Neverwinter Nights for 30 mins. The atmosphere that dynamic shadows from multiple light sources create is amazing and adds a lot more to the game than you would expect.



x	y
1	1
3	3
1	1

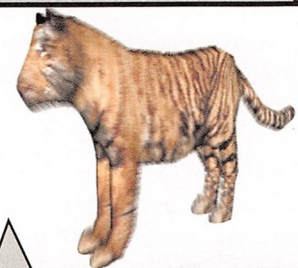
x	y
1	1
5	1
5	5

Vector shader

Generated Fur



A straight rendering of a tiger



By displacing the object with the vector shader and leaving the image intact between frames is an easy way of having an object give the impression of fur.

Conclusion

Vertex and Pixel shaders - they're bright, fast, full of colour, absolutely amazing and can produce graphical effects to die for. But they're severely underutilised. Perhaps with the releasing of nVIDIA's CG graphics language which is completely DirectX and cross platform compatible (CG works on ATI cards) we will start to see more advanced renderings for our PC. The sad reality at the moment however is that it's the Xbox that's enjoying the most advanced use of Vertex and Pixel shading - ain't it amazing what standardised hardware does to motivate developers? Still, with the ease of which an Xbox game can be recompiled to work on a PC, particularly PCs with nVIDIA video cards we, hopefully, will have a lot of graphical goodness to look forward to.

Jere Lawrence

Games that support Vertex and Pixel Shading

Title	Vertex	Pixel	Bump
4x4 Evolution 2	Y	Y	Y
Alien Vs. Predator 2	Y	Y	Y
AquaNox	Y	Y	Y
Ballistics	Y	Y	Y
Battle Realms	Y	N	Y
Beam Breakers	Y	N	N
C.O.N.S.E.A.L.	Y	N	N
Comanche 4	Y	N	Y
Crazy Car Championship	Y	Y	Y
Dakar Rally	N	N	Y
Drakan (patched)	N	N	Y
Dronez	Y	N	Y
Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	Y	Y	Y
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Y	Y	Y
Incoming Forces	Y	Y	Y
I War 2: Edge of Chaos	Y	Y	Y
Madden 2002	N	N	Y
Mafia	Y	Y	N
Max Payne	Y	N	Y
Mechcommander 2	N	N	Y
Silent Hunter II	N	N	Y
Space Haste	Y	N	Y
Throne of Darkness	N	N	Y
UEFA champions	Y	Y	Y
World Sports Cars	Y	Y	Y

Matrox

Parhelia 512

Last month (PCPP#77) we took a look at the abilities of the new Matrox Parhelia, now it's time to see how the card performed.

Installing the card was delightfully simple. You just plug it into your AGP slot, start your machine and install the drivers from the CD. There were no hassles and the Matrox PowerDesk Wizard software was easy to use and for every option there was a thorough explanation with the wizard capably guiding you through the setup.

The bundled Matrox reef demo really showed off the card's imaging abilities which was vibrant, rich and had a fullness about it that actually verified Matrox's superior colour claims. The 16x edge anti-aliasing was extremely effective and gave all the underwater models a very realistic look - there literally weren't any jaggies anywhere to be seen. The quad textured sea life was also extremely impressive with environment maps that emulated the displacement of light and the objects also somehow had a solidity to them that differentiated it from the output of other cards. Particularly effective was the bump-mapped coral that although was a stencil sprite the added quad texturing gave it a 3D look.

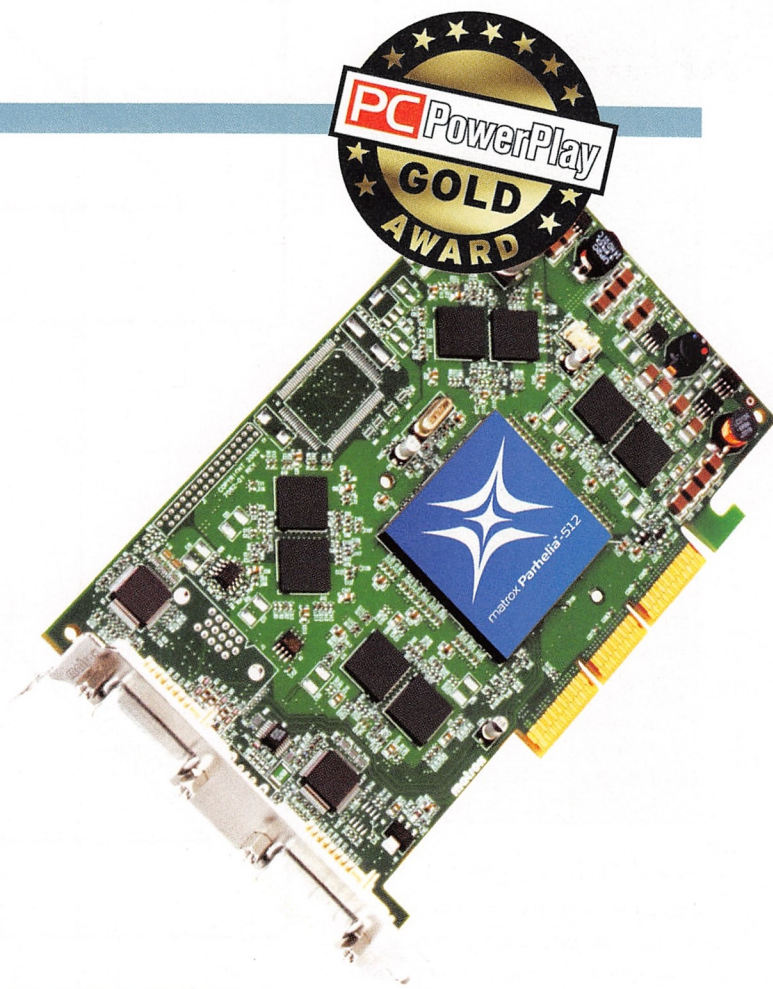
For all the hype, the Parhelia isn't as fast as the GeForce 4 Ti4600 and its best result could only achieve 90% of the G4's speed. On average though the card managed 75% the

performance of a 4600. But really, the Parhelia isn't about raw power and instead places its focus on image quality and extra functionality.

Although there aren't currently any games that support Hardware Displacement Mapping the bundled demo showed what this card could do. In real time the canyons and peaks of a natural environment were effectively rendered and moved fluidly. Quite impressively, the environment could be raised or lowered in real time with the press of the plus or minus key. It's unlikely that any non HDM capable video card could do this because the load on the processor would just be too much.

Surround Gaming and Desktop

Despite the performance shortfall of the Parhelia it's surround gaming and desktop functionality is simply superb. Setting up the three monitors was delightfully easy. You just plug each one into the appropriate input, start your machine, run the PowerDesk configurator, select the correct option and suddenly your desktop is effortlessly expanded across the three screens. I was initially cynical about the usefulness of multi-desktop displays but am now hooked, especially when it's as easy to setup as the Parhelia. Besides having an ultra large desktop other useful functionality includes the ability to use one monitor as a zoomed screen that tracks the mouse from the main monitor



and expands the area onto the second. This would be very useful for desktop publishers allowing them to inspect images or text without having to constantly zoom in and out.

The other aspect of this is surround gaming which allows for any QIII based game to run across all three monitors. Installing the functionality however isn't as easy as setting up the desktop but then again isn't rocket science. Basically you have to modify the Q3 config file then add a setting to the registry. The card comes with PDF documentation on how to configure a variety of games but for the uninitiated an automated installer would be preferable.

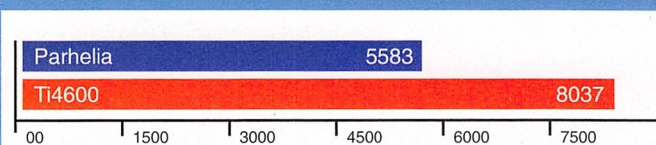
Gaming in Surround mode was quite good but not perfect. The flushing between each

monitor gave the display a disjointed feeling that wasn't there in desktop mode (most likely because you could drag a singular application to each screen). The other problem was that after testing the technology on three people, two came away feeling a little nauseous (myself included). This isn't necessarily a fault of the card but rather the result of having your peripheral vision involved in the gaming experience.

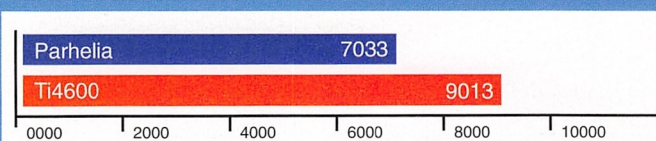
Overall the Matrox Parhelia is a fine and worthy card but isn't going to appeal to those who want the fastest of the fast. With excellent image quality and satisfactory performance it's the surround gaming and desktop functionality that really makes this a desirable card.

Jere Lawrence

3D Marks - 1280x1024x32bit NoAA Results



4xAA - 1024x768x32bit Results



Price: \$1060

Distributor: Focal Point Computing

URL: www.focalpoint.com.au

Phone: (03) 9372 6600

Not as fast as a GeForce 4 but with gorgeous image quality and fantastic multi monitor support.

SCORE

92

Triplex Xabre Pro

In the past, SiS graphics chipsets have been known for great 2D performance and vast multimedia feature-set but never cracked the 3D enthusiast market. This is mainly due to the fact that performance has not been quite up to the standards of competing products from nVidia and ATI. Looking to change this, SiS has recently introduced its latest graphics chipset, the Xabre 400 which is targeted at the budget gaming market.

For starters, the Xabre 400 is the first graphics chipset to provide AGP 8x support and the first budget card to feature full DirectX 8.1 support. Although AGP 8x can theoretically provide double the bandwidth of AGP 4x, the extra bandwidth is potentially underutilised because once texture data is transferred to the cards local memory, the bus sits relatively idle. As current games are yet to utilise a video cards available memory, it's unlikely the AGP bus will be heavily accessed, so fast AGP transfer rates are unnecessary. This is also the reason why we have not seen a significant performance difference between AGP 2x and AGP 4x. Furthermore, at the time of writing this review there are no AGP 8x supporting motherboards on the market, however, most future motherboards should provide AGP 8x as a standard feature.

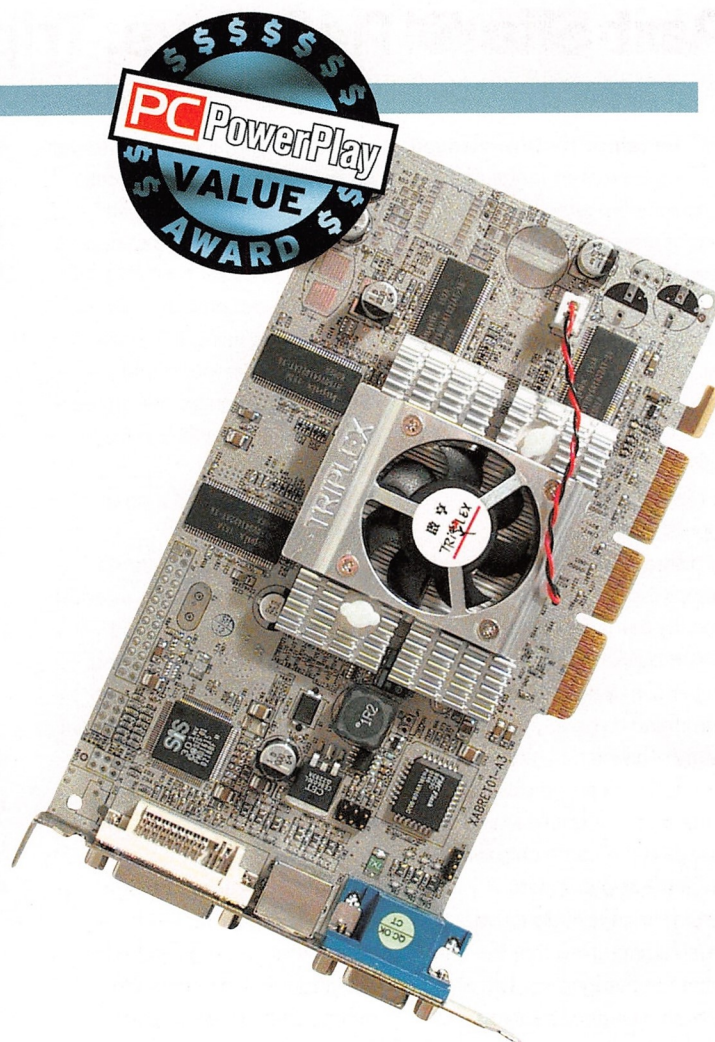
The Xabre 400 chipset features an advanced third-generation T&L unit which supports a 16 vertex cache for

Pixel Shading, utilising a programmable instruction set. Furthermore, the chipset supports 1x, 2x and 4x FSAA as well as Frictionless Memory Control which is said to improve overall memory efficiency. Unfortunately, the Xabre 400's vertex shading is emulated by the CPU so greater load will be placed on the processor and will create a bottleneck for users running older CPUs.

Triplex's Xabre Pro features a core clock speed of 250MHz and 64MB of DDR memory running at 250MHz (500MHz effective). The memory chips used on the card were manufactured by Hynix and are rated at 3.6ns. Completing the card's rich feature-set are both TV and DVI outputs, as well as support for dual monitors provided by the SiS 301 controller.

When compared with an Abit GeForce4 MX440 in both 3DMark2001 SE and Quake 3 Arena the results were quite pleasing. The Xabre performed slightly better in Quake 3, and was faster in 3DMark2001 SE. The significant performance difference shown in 3DMark2001 SE is largely due to the fact that the Xabre chipset features full DirectX 8.1 support, while the GeForce4 MX440 only supports DirectX 8.0, lacking hardware vertex and pixel shaders.

Overall, we were very impressed with the Triplex Xabre Pro. Although it's not a card for the high-end gamer, it certainly ranks near the top of the budget graphics card market. Its rich

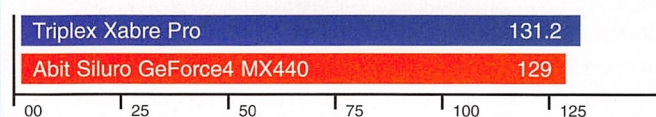


feature-set is an added bonus for users running digital LCD displays, dual monitors or TV-out. At a price of \$198, the Triplex Xabre Pro is quite a bargain, weighing in slightly cheaper than the GeForce4 MX440 which sells

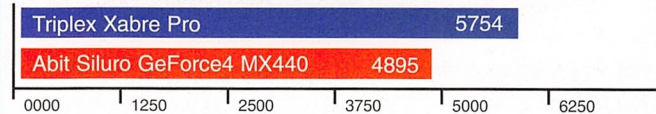
for around \$210. If you are after a new graphics card but don't have huge amounts of money to spend, you should definitely give the Triplex Xabre Pro some serious consideration.

Asher Moses

Quake 3 Arena - 1024x768 32bit Results



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Xabre 400 vs. GF4 MX440

	Xabre 400	GF4 MX440
Codename	Xabre 400	NV17
Core Clock	250MHz	270MHz
Memory Clock	250MHz DDR	200MHz DDR
Memory Amount	64/128MB	64/128MB
Memory Type	DDR	DDR
Memory Bandwidth	8GB/sec	6.4GB/sec
Memory Bus	64/128bit	128bit
Pixel Shaders	Yes (Hardware)	No
Vertex Shaders	Yes (Software)	Yes (Software)
T&L	Yes	Yes
AGP Transfer Rate	8x	4x

Price: \$198

Distributor: Oxygen

URL: www.oxygen.net.au

Phone: (02) 9649 4477

SCORE

Gaming on a budget - Great performance at a low price.

82

Abit Siluro Ti4200 vs. Triplex Millennium Ti4200

Ever since nVIDIA released its GeForce4 range of graphics chipsets, the most sought after of them all has been its "value" high-end product, the Ti4200. This is because it provides stellar performance while at the same time being very reasonably priced. Furthermore, the fact that it can quite easily overclock to Ti4600 speeds has made it a popular choice amongst hardware enthusiasts and hardcore gamers alike. We have recently managed to obtain Ti4200-based cards from both Abit and Triplex, and have put them head-to-head in order to determine which is more worthy of your hard-earned dollars. Due to the fact that both cards are based on the same chipset and run at the same speed, performance is likely to be identical, meaning that the only factors separating the two are software bundle, features, overclockability and most importantly, price.

Software Bundle

If you are after an elaborate software bundle, the Triplex card is clearly superior. It comes bundled with two full version games: Spiderman and Severance: Blade of Darkness, whereas the Abit card only comes with SiluroDVD (Abit's own DVD playback software).

Features

Both cards feature DVI (Digital Video Interface for LCD

monitors) and TV outputs, as well as default core/memory clock speeds of 250MHz/500MHz. However, Triplex has decided to utilise a Conexant CX25871-14 video encoder chip on its card, whilst Abit is using the Phillips SAA7108E. We found that although both chips performed admirably, the Phillips encoder chip was slightly superior - producing a crisper, clearer image.

The Abit Ti4200 features 64MB of Hynix memory rated at 4ns, while the Triplex card features 128MB of Samsung memory rated at 4ns. Hynix memory is known to have great overclocking potential and this is clearly shown by our overclocking results. We were able to run the Abit card utilising Hynix memory at a stable 315MHz/625MHz core/memory clock, while the maximum speed we could obtain from the Samsung equipped Triplex card was 280MHz/580MHz.

Performance

As you can see from the benchmarking graphs, the extra 64MB of memory on the Triplex card has a negligible effect on real-world performance in current games. Both cards performed virtually identically in all tests - Which is not surprising, considering the fact that both cards are running at the same clock speed and are based on the same graphics chipset. FSAA (Full Scene Anti-

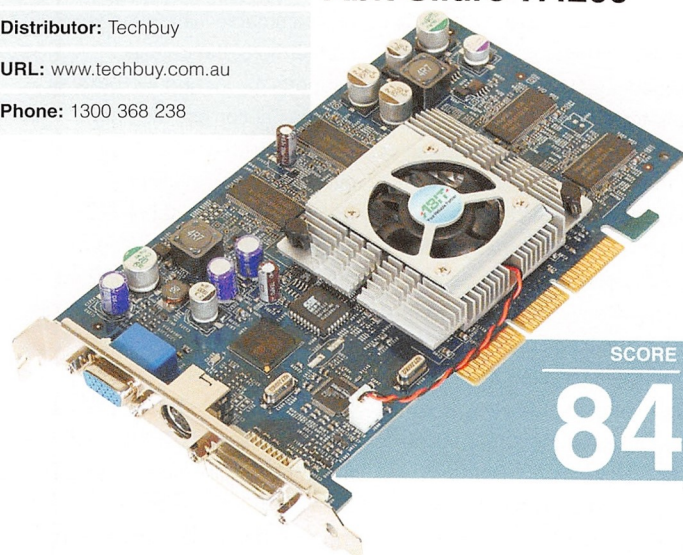
Price: \$405.90

Distributor: Techbuy

URL: www.techbuy.com.au

Phone: 1300 368 238

Abit Siluro Ti4200



SCORE

84

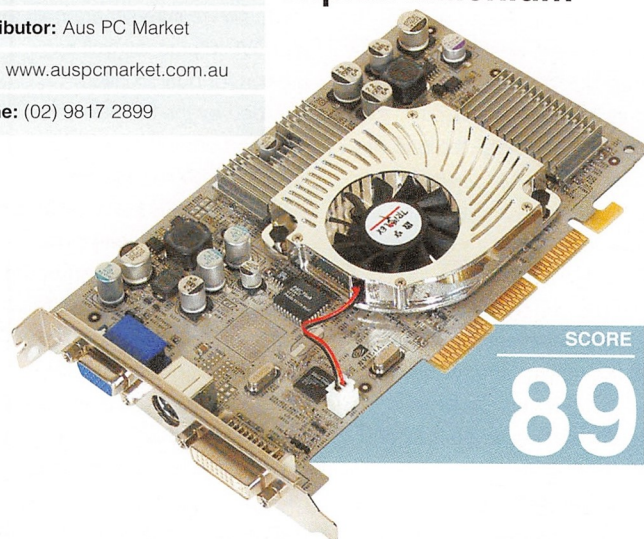
Price: \$412.50

Distributor: Aus PC Market

URL: www.auspcmarket.com.au

Phone: (02) 9817 2899

Triplex Millennium



SCORE

89

Aliasing) is one area where the 128MB of memory on the Triplex Ti4200 comes in real handy. In many upcoming games, 64MB of graphics card memory is required and if FSAA is enabled - with a 64MB graphics card it would then start swapping out to system memory using AGP. This results in a slight performance hit due to the fact that the data has to travel down the AGP bus to main memory, which let me tell you is not a short trip. In current games we saw a negligible increase in FSAA 4x performance, however, when memory hungry titles such as Unreal Tournament 2003 are

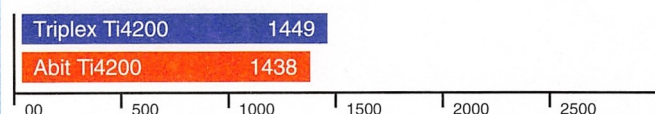
released, we will begin to see the real benefits of the extra memory.

Summary

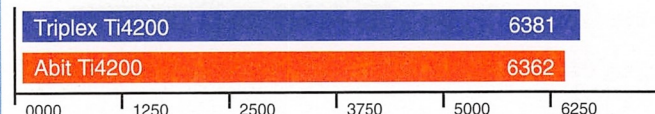
As far as price is concerned, the Triplex Millennium Ti4200 will set you back around \$412, while the Abit Siluro Ti4200 is only slightly cheaper at \$405. Given that the difference in price is only minor and the Triplex card ships with an extra 64MB of memory and two full version games your purchasing decision becomes somewhat simple. Ultimately though, you won't be disappointed if you decide to purchase either of the two cards.

Asher Moses

Quake 3 Arena - 1024x768 32bit Results



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Abit IT7

Over the past few months, Abit has dragged the motherboard industry out of the past and spearheaded its move into the future with their MAX line of motherboards. These legacy free boards have taken the market by storm, losing the ageing PS/2, Serial and Parallel ports in favour of superior technologies such as IEEE1394 (Firewire), USB 2.0 and 6-channel audio. We took a detailed look at Abit's original MAX motherboard for the AMD SocketA platform, the AT7, back in PCPP#75. Since then we have managed to obtain Abit's second MAX motherboard, the IT7 - based on the i845E chipset for the Socket478 Pentium 4.

Among the board's many features are two IEEE1394 ports, six USB 2.0 ports, a 10/100 Ethernet port, 4-channel ATA133 RAID provided by the Highpoint HPT374 controller and 6-channel audio. The sound output produced by the audio controller was some of the best we've seen from an integrated audio solution - Being comparable to that of the Creative Soundblaster Live! PCI solution. This is largely due to the fact that it features a 6-

channel DAC (Digital-to-Analog Converter) for AC3 5.1 channel sound and supports both the A3D and EAX API standards.

The IT7 features a slot layout of 4 PCI, 1 AGP and 3 DDR266 DIMM slots supporting a maximum of 2GB PC2100 memory. Although we are used to seeing at least 5 or 6 PCI slots on most current motherboards, this would have been impossible for Abit as the sheer amount of onboard controllers leaves little free space for anything else. Furthermore, the integrated Ethernet, audio, USB 2.0 and IEEE1394 controllers virtually

eliminate the need for network cards, sound cards and many other add-in cards you may be looking at installing.

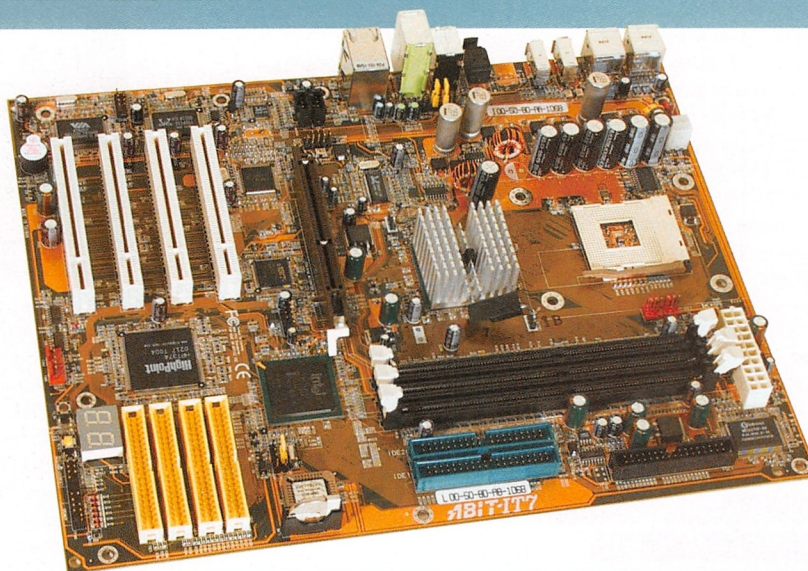
The IT7's physical layout was very impressive, with the ATX power header and IDE/Floppy headers being located towards the top right-hand corner of the board - Ensuring that cabling does not run over the top of your heatsink/fan unit or any other components, which in turn increases airflow and allows for easy installation of add-in cards and other components.

Upon entering the board's BIOS you are greeted with a plethora of overclocking options that enable you to tweak your system for maximum performance. These include: FSB adjustments up to 250MHz in 1MHz increments, multiplier adjustments up to 24x and VCore/DDR voltage adjustments up to 1.7V and 3.2V respectively. There is also the ability to lock your AGP and PCI bus at their default speeds, thus eliminating the chance of your AGP/PCI devices become bottlenecks whilst overclocking.

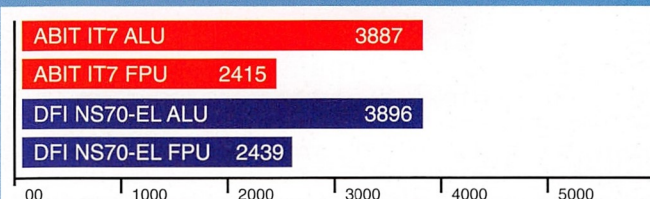
Like the Abit BD7II-RAID also reviewed in this issue, the IT7 is based on the i845E chipset and thus, only officially supports DDR266 memory. This means that performance numbers are not as high as competing chipsets equipped with DDR333 memory. In all benchmarks, our SiS645DX comparison board significantly outperformed the IT7. That's not to say we thought the IT7's performance was disappointing, it's just lower than expected.

In summary, the only factor stopping the IT7 from receiving a perfect score is the fact that its performance isn't up to the standards of boards based on competing chipsets such as the SiS645DX - obviously due to the fact that it does not support DDR333 memory. That said, the board's added features and excellent layout would certainly justify the slightly reduced performance for many of you. At a price of \$375, the board is not cheap, however, it is certainly worth the money if you feel that you will be using all of the features provided.

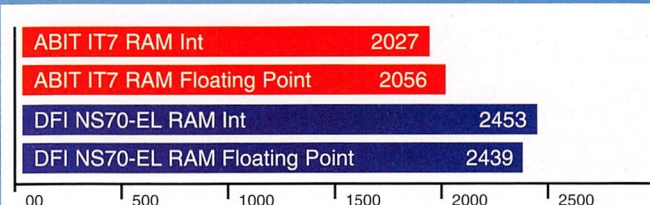
Asher Moses



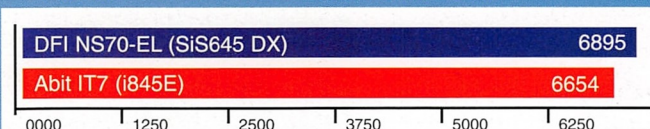
SiSoft Sandra 2002 - CPU Benchmark



SiSoft Sandra 2002 - Memory Benchmark



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Price: \$375

Distributor: Compuparts

URL: www.compuparts.com.au

Phone: (02) 9482 2582

An innovative, feature-rich motherboard that is slightly let down by its high price and comparatively low performance.

SCORE

80

Abit

BD7II-RAID

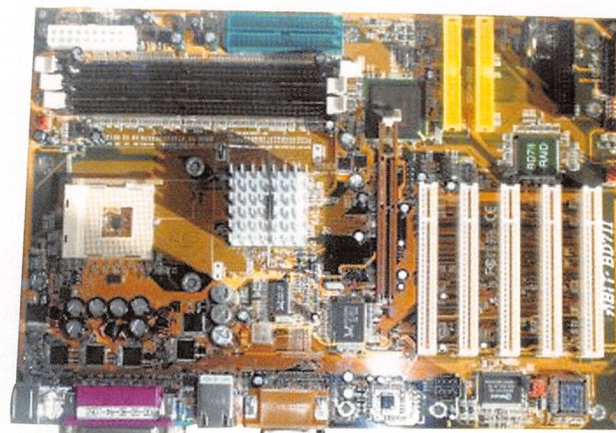
Sitting well on the first wave of i845E motherboards is Abit's latest socket478 offering, the BD7II-RAID. Supporting Intel's new 533MHz bus Pentium 4 processors, the board features a slot layout of 1 AGP, 5 PCI and 3 DDR DIMM slots. This is a common slot layout used by many motherboard manufacturers and the lack of CNR, AMR and ISA slots shows that Abit is targeting the enthusiast market with this board, rather than the OEM market.

Feature-wise, the BD7II-RAID supports 2-channel ATA133 RAID

through a HighPoint HPT372 controller, as well as 10/100 Ethernet and 2-channel AC97 audio. While the AC97 audio controller is certainly sufficient for general windows use, the inclusion of a higher quality controller from CMedia or Creative would have been a much better decision.

The overall layout of the board was logical and well thought out with the ATX power header and floppy/IDE headers all well placed, ensuring that no wires run over the top of your heatsink/fan unit.

In usual Abit style, the BIOS features



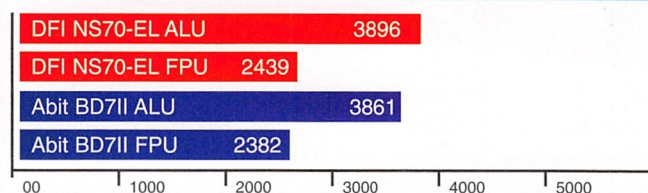
an array of tweaking options that is sure to satisfy even the most enthusiastic overclocker. Front side bus speeds can be adjusted up to 250MHz in 1MHz increments, and for those with unlocked processors, the multiplier can also be adjusted up to 24x. As well as this, the VCore and DIMM voltages can be raised in order to gain stability at overclocked speeds.

As far as performance goes, we can't help but be slightly disappointed with the BD7II-RAID. It performs significantly slower than SiS's competing 645DX chipset, which is

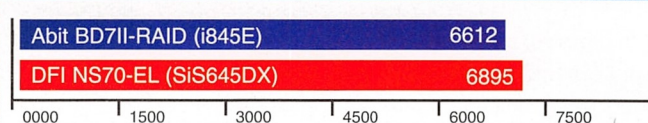
mainly due to the fact that it lacks DDR333 memory support. However, at a price of only \$260, the board is cheap enough to justify the reduced performance. The bottom line is, if you are looking for a low-cost, feature-rich Pentium 4 solution and don't require ultra-high performance, you won't be disappointed with the BD7II-RAID. However, if you have a bit of extra money and can afford to upgrade to DDR333 memory, then a board based on a competing chipset such as the SiS645DX might be a smarter choice.

Asher Moses

SiSoft Sandra 2002 - CPU Benchmark



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Price: \$258.50

Distributor: Aus PC Market

URL: www.auspcmarket.com.au

Phone: (02) 9817 2899

A quality motherboard that is let down by its lack of DDR333 memory support

SCORE

70

Soyo

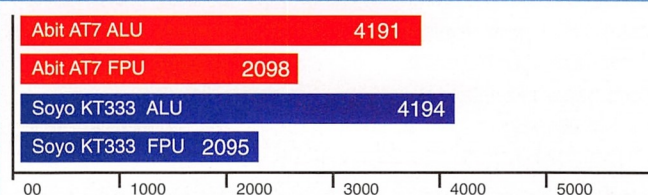
KT333 Dragon Ultra

Bringing balance to the amount of Pentium 4 motherboards reviewed this issue is Soyo's latest board based on the VIA KT333 chipset, the KT333 Dragon Ultra. Aside from its attractive black PCB and contrasting purple PCI slots, the KT333 Dragon Ultra is truly feature-rich - Supporting 2-channel ATA133 RAID, four USB 2.0 ports, a 10/100 Ethernet port and 6-channel audio featuring support for full 5.1 surround sound. The audio controller also features SPDIF IN/OUT and optical outputs, enabled by a bundled

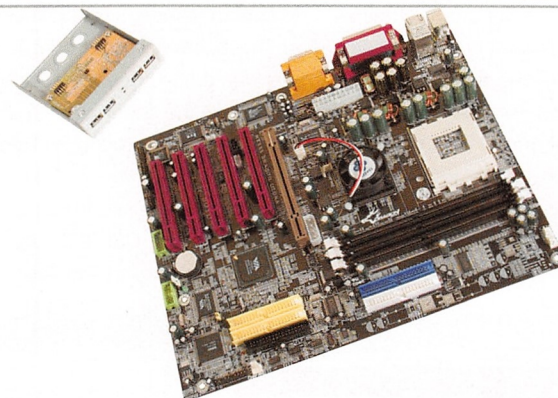
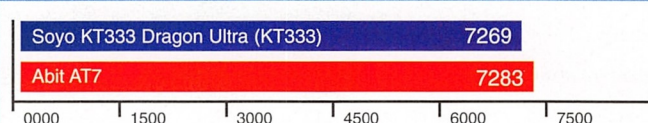
bracket that can be installed in place of a PCI slot. For added convenience, the board also includes a USB panel that can be inserted into either a 3.5" or 5.25" drive bay - enabling four USB 2.0 ports that are backwards compatible with USB 1.1 devices.

The KT333 Dragon Ultra features a slot layout of 5 PCI, 1 AGP and 3 DDR DIMM slots, supporting a maximum of 3GB DDR 200/266/333 memory. This should be more than sufficient for most users; however, it would have been nice to have seen an extra PCI or DIMM slot included.

SiSoft Sandra 2002 - CPU Benchmark



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Just by looking at the board it is obvious that quite a bit of thought has gone into designing its physical layout. There is plenty of room around the CPU socket for any large heatsink/fan units you may own, the ATX power header has been well placed so that little to no cabling runs over the top of your cpu cooler and the IDE/Floppy connectors do not get in the way of any PCI devices and can be easily reached.

We compared the KT333 Dragon Ultra's performance to the Abit AT7 in both SiSoft Sandra 2002 and 3DMark2001 SE. Considering both boards are based on the same chipset,

it is unsurprising that the performance difference is minimal. However, it is great to see the Dragon Ultra performing on par with one of the best KT333 boards on the market.

Overall, the Soyo KT333 Dragon Ultra is an impressive board. It provides high performance, a rich feature-set and to top things off, boasts an excellent layout as well. At a price of around \$US165, it is certainly not the cheapest KT333 motherboard on the market, however, the board's quality and feature-set will certainly justify the extra cost for many of you.

Asher Moses

Price: \$165 US

Distributor: Soyo

URL: soyousa.com/commerce/

Phone: N/A

High performance, a great layout and plenty of features. Slightly let down by its high price.

SCORE

81

Antec

TruePower 550w PSU

Antec recently made an entrance into the power supply (PSU) market with their latest product range, TruePower. Antec TruePower PSUs come in 330watt, 380watt, 430watt, 480watt and 550watt models, and are in direct competition with the already established range from Enermax. We managed to obtain Antec's most powerful unit, the True550. With a 550watt maximum output current, the unit is capable of supplying more power than your average PC user will ever require - unless you're planning on running some sort of peltier/watercooling combination or an extremely heavy duty RAID array.

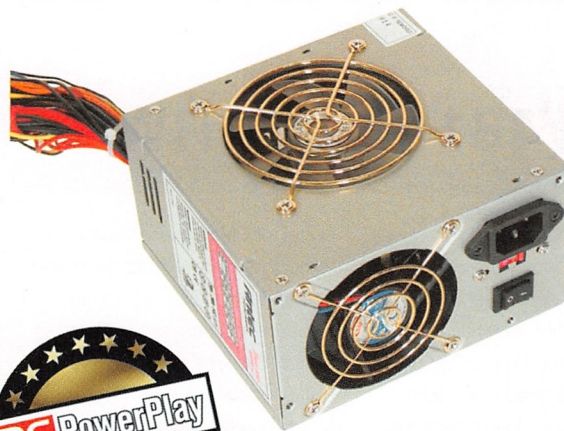
The unit is compatible with all current AMD and Intel processors, featuring the ATX12V connector that the Pentium 4 requires for stable operation. Cooling the unit are two 80mm case fans that utilise Antec's "Low Noise Technology". Using a fan header on your motherboard, this technology detects the temperature of your PSU and sets fan speeds accordingly - Meaning that if the unit isn't running very hot, the fans won't be rotating at their

maximum speed and thus, will produce less noise.

Using a multimeter, we tested the current flowing across the +5V, +12V and +3.3V rails under 10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 100% and 110% of maximum output current (550watt). As you can see from the results table, the unit performed on par with its rated specifications, even under 110% load. Voltage readings in blue are the numbers recorded from the Volt-meter across the load. The current through the load was obtained by calculating the series resistance required for achieving the desired current flow under load conditions. Throughout testing, the power output remained constant and there were no signs of struggling.

Overall, the Antec TruePower 550w PSU performed admirably and on par with its designed specifications of 550 watt maximum output. This unit certainly won't have any trouble powering almost any system you put in front of it. At a price of \$195, it is also one of the cheapest 550watt PSUs available on the market today.

Asher Moses



	+5V		+12V		+3.3V		Calculated Total Output Power in Watts
LOAD	A	V	A	V	A	V	
Rated	40.0		24.0		32.0		
10%	4	5.15	2.4	12.26	3.2	3.35	85.24
25%	10	4.98	6	12.24	8	3.32	174.30
50%	20	4.94	12	12.19	16	3.28	322.06
75%	30	4.92	18	12.14	24	3.23	468.14
100%	40	4.90	19	12.14	32	3.22	554.20
100%	26	4.89	24	12.13	32	3.21	545.48
100%	40	4.87	24	12.12	13	3.32	553.34
110%	41	4.85	24	11.75	32	3.20	607.75

Price: \$195

Distributor: Gamedude

URL: www.gamedude.com.au

Phone: (07) 3841 5144

An excellent power supply with more than enough juice to power any PC you throw at it.

SCORE

90

PowerLeap

PL-iP3/T CPU Upgrade

Are you stuck with an ageing Slot 1 motherboard and a now painfully slow Pentium II/III processor? If so, chances are you are going to be searching for a means of upgrading your system in the near future - and you will soon learn that it is going to cost you much more than you originally bargained for. Say, for example you decide to purchase a new CPU. This will firstly mean purchasing a new motherboard, as Intel have changed their CPU pin configuration since the Slot 1 days. Secondly, considering the fact that most modern motherboards lack ISA, AMR and CNR slots, you will also need to upgrade any devices you own that utilise these slots.

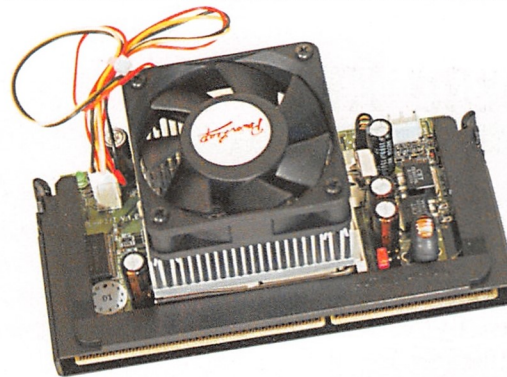
Sounds expensive doesn't it? Fear not as PowerLeap believe they have the answer to this common upgrade problem - The PL-iP3/T. At first glance, the unit looks like a regular Slot 1 cartridge with a heatsink/fan unit attached to its side. However, located under this heatsink/fan unit is a Socket370 1.2GHz Pentium III processor, based on Intel's new 'Tualatin' core featuring 512kb L2 cache and utilising 0.13-micron technology.

Installing the upgrade was a fairly simple affair - Once the unit has been slotted into your motherboard and the system is powered up, the new CPU should automatically be detected without a hitch.

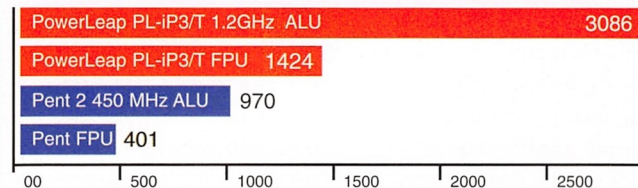
The upgrade was tested on an AOpen AX6BC motherboard running 256MB PC100 SDRAM and a Geforce 2 GTS graphics card. As you can see from the benchmarking graphs, the iP3/T provided a significant performance increase over the Pentium II 450MHz processor that was previously installed. Throughout testing the system remained completely stable and it even ran through 12 hours of SiSoft Sandra's intensive CPU Burn-In test without one crash or lockup.

Overall, the PowerLeap iP3/T CPU upgrade is ideal for users wanting to give their old Slot 1 system a tangible boost without having to upgrade their motherboard and possibly add-in cards as well. At a price of \$329, the iP3/T is not exactly cheap, however, it will certainly end up cheaper than purchasing a separate 1.2GHz Pentium III processor and a new motherboard.

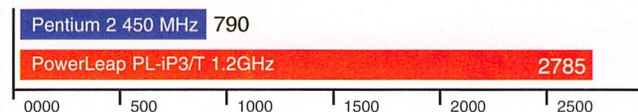
Asher Moses



SiSoft Sandra 2002 - CPU Benchmark



3D Mark 2001 SE - 1024x768x32bit Results



Price: \$329

Distributor: Powerleap

URL: www.powerleap.com

Phone: N.A.

An innovative, low-cost performance boost for your ageing Slot 1 system.

SCORE

85

Asus

CRW4816A CD-RW

ASUS is renowned for its high quality range of motherboards and graphics products and has recently decided to enter the CD-RW drive market. On the test-bench this month is ASUS's current flagship CD-RW, the CRW4816A. Featuring a write speed of 48x (P-CAV), a rewrite speed of 16x (CLV) and a read speed of 48x, this writer is easily one of the fastest available on the market today.

To protect from buffer underruns, the drive features "FlextraLink" technology where once the available data drops below 1% of the total buffer capacity, the recording is suspended and a marker is set. Once enough cache data is refilled, the pickup head repositions itself to the marker and restarts the recording.

The drive features an internal

buffer of 2MB where data is temporarily stored before being written to the CD - important because the larger the data buffer, the less chance of a buffer underrun error occurring. Most CD-RW drives of this speed feature an 8MB buffer so ASUS's smaller cache size was slightly disappointing.

Using CD Speed 99, like most CD-RW drives to date, the maximum write speed of 48x was only accomplished when writing to the outer edges of the CD with the drive managing an average write speed of 40x. Read speed also maxed out at 48x but maintained an average speed of 40x. Judging from these test results the smaller data buffer did not affect real-world performance.

Unlike some CD-RW drives we have tested, the CRW4816A managed to maintain an average



write speed very close to that of its advertised specifications as well as producing quite impressive read speeds. At a price of around \$185, the drive is not cheap but if you are

looking for a new CD writer and want the fastest drive money can buy, you will not be disappointed with the ASUS CRW4816A.

Asher Moses

Price: \$185

Distributor: Achieva

URL: www.achieva.com.au

Phone: (02) 9742 3288

One of the fastest CD-RW drives currently on the market.

SCORE

80

Abit

Media XP

Over the past year, we have seen more features packed onto motherboards than ever before. Who would've thought that we'd be seeing USB 2.0, IEEE1394, 5.1 audio and 10/100 Ethernet controllers all on one ATX motherboard? However, we are now reaching a point where space and convenience becomes an issue and motherboard manufacturers are looking at other means of providing extra features while at the same time staying practical.

Enter the Abit Media XP - A handy device that can be inserted into a 5 1/4" drive bay, featuring memory stick, SD (San Disk) and Compact Flash card readers, as well as microphone/headphone jacks, an S/PDIF OUT connector, two USB 2.0 ports and one IEEE1394/Firewire port. To top things off, the unit is

bundled with a handy remote control that can be used with the WinDVD 3.1 and Win Rip 5.1 software provided, as well as MP3 playback programs such as WinAmp.

Installing the unit is a simple affair - Just slide it into a free 5 1/4" drive bay and plug the cables into the appropriate headers on your motherboard. The Media XP supports all operating systems, however, folks not using Windows XP will have to manually install drivers located on the bundled CD in order for your OS to recognise the card readers.

Overall, we were quite impressed with the Media XP and being located at the front of your chassis, it certainly beats reaching around to the back of your PC every time you want to install/uninstall a device. In fact,



the only qualm we had with the unit is the fact that it only supports Abit's MAX series of motherboards (eg. The IT7 reviewed in this issue and the AT7 reviewed in issue #75). At a price of \$150, the Media XP is not cheap either, however, if you

consider the amount of money you would be spending on a standalone card reader and the added convenience that the front ports bring, the Media XP is actually quite a bargain.

Asher Moses

Price: \$150

Distributor: Compuparts

URL: www.compuparts.com.au

Phone: (02) 9482 2582

Feature-packed and convenient, slightly let down by its limited motherboard support and high price.

SCORE

73

Zippy RF-711

Cordless keyboard

Cords and cables are a bane of computing.

Tangles, length limitations and more tangles are enough to send you insane. Cordless devices are the answer to this problem and we put one such peripheral, the Zippy cordless keyboard through its paces.

Installing the keyboard is relatively easy but not quite plug and play. First you plug the radio frequency receiver into the PS/2 port and then insert the four provided batteries into the keyboard itself. The next step of the installation process involves using a pen or pin to press a small button on the receiver to sync them. The manual however was vague on this process and it did take some time to find the little buttons.

The keyboard itself is light, slim and at a convex angle not

completely flat. It features 8 rubber web navigation buttons, mute, volume and CD controls plus wake, sleep and power buttons. Unfortunately, the QWERTY aspect of the keyboard is very notebook like and not the most pleasant to work with. The keys are too shallow and way to close together so it's very easy to make numerous typos. Compounding this is that the arrow keys, page, home and end keys are not in the standard 101 layout but are instead located along the right hand side. The enter and backspace keys are also in a bad position and very easy to hit accidentally. The F keys are located equally poorly and are too close to the number keys. The range of the receiver however is very good. Although listed at only 1.5m, I had it working from a 5m distance just fine.

Jere Lawrence



Price: \$90

Distributor: Anyware Accessories

URL: www.anyware.com.au

Phone: (02) 9879 5788

It has a nice silver finish and offers all the advantages of cordless-ness but is clumsy with a frustrating layout and slow to type on.

SCORE

42

Altec Lansing

251 5.1speaker system

I've said it before and I'll say it again. Speakers are an important part of your gaming setup because soundwaves are a physical component of the environment and can give a sense of depth, space, location and distance better than the limited display of a monitor. Besides, the modern PC is also often used as a CD and/or DVD player.

Attractively black with a metallic grey trim, the subwoofer stands 28cm tall with the satellite speakers a respectable 13.5cm. The right front speaker features a headphone jack, centre speaker volume, surround/spacialisation control and a master volume. The on speaker surround control in particular made a big difference to the spacialisation of sound and allowed for the fine tuning of the all important sweet spot.

Installation is extremely easy.

Just plug the speakers into the appropriate outputs on the sound card and you're ready to go but to its detriment the rear speaker cables are way too short. At only 3 meters the majority of people will need to purchase an additional male to female RCA cable to extend the length which potentially degrades sound quality.

Bass response is very good and at high volumes really shook the walls. Unfortunately the subwoofer's plastic casing was a little flimsy and did rattle from the powerful vibrations, but this only occurred when turned up to a thoroughly impractical volume. Treble response was excellent producing strong, sharp tones allowing you to easily discern the pitch of instruments and upper frequency sounds. Maximum volume was extremely loud and did lose clarity but this was only



at an ear bleeding level.

DVD playback was excellent and the 5.1 support greatly enhanced the movie experience. As the centre speaker's volume can be increased there was

never a problem with dialogue being drowned out by sound effects. Gaming was equally fine with no irritating crackles or pops around explosions.

Jere Lawrence

Price: \$250

Distributor: Innovision

URL: www.innovision.com.au/

Phone: 1300 785 795

A very capable upper mid range solution that should be considered by anyone looking for an affordable 5.1 system for their PC.

SCORE

83

Saitek

X45 Throttle / Joystick

Specialists need specialist tools. Likewise a gamer needs particular tools to play each game at peak performance. And so enters the Saitek X45 throttle/joystick combo. Does it aid you in your quest for gaming domination? Read on.

Installation was quite easy. Being a USB device you just install the driver software and plug it into your USB port. As the joystick only requires a small amount of power a low power USB port (such as on a keyboard) is sufficient. Configuring the joystick to work with games was relatively easy but different. The configuration software installs game profiles as folders that expand out to allow for different keys to be mapped to a joystick button. A little clumsy to use but since you only need to configure a game once, not too serious.

The throttle and joystick is full featured with 26 buttons and 3 axes of movement. There's 7 fire buttons, 3x 4-way hat switches, 2 mode switches (to assign different commands to the fire buttons), 2 rotary switches, an 8 way hat, and a throttle with rudder controls on the underside.

Using the joystick was both good and bad. The plastic handles and throttle have a rubbery coating that aids your grip giving a good solid feel. A strong spring at the base of the joystick offers excellent resistance and allows very accurate movements. The fire buttons however aren't completely comfortable. The main trigger is easy to press but the top buttons are quite a distance away making it difficult to use them in a fire fight. A pinky button located along the shaft of the



joystick is intrusive and way too easy to hit accidentally but disabling this makes it a lot more comfortable.

Playing Mechwarrior 4 was pleasant - the throttle and accuracy made the Mech easier

to control but reaching for the top buttons made twitch responses difficult. In a flight sim where you need to make finer movements this joystick performed great.

Jere Lawrence

Price: \$220

Distributor: Innovision

URL: www.innovision.com.au

Phone: 300 785 795

A worthy joystick for a flight sim but not too great with twitch sims such as Mechwarrior 4 or Starlancer.

SCORE

77

Reality Systems

Reality GP cockpit

If you consider yourself a hardcore driving nut who stares wistfully at arcade racing frames then the Reality GP cockpit is your dream come true. Measuring in at 160cm long, 60cm wide, 60cm high and weighing 31kg, the cockpit is solid, sturdy and ships with the Logitech Wingman Formula GP in its default configuration.

Installation is extremely easy. Arriving as a completed frame the seat requires only four bolts to secure it to the Holden VR/VS seat runners. Being real car runners the seat is also fully adjustable to accommodate the many lengths of humanity and also allows for the mounting of compatible or off the shelf racing seats. Actually, everything about the unit is customisable and the manufacturer can mount other commercial wheels such as the

Logitech Momo or even a fully custom built professional wheel and side mounted gear shift. The default wheel however uses a 15 pin game port connector which is poorly supported under Windows XP.

Using the cockpit was quite fun and though cramped it ably supported my 6'8" frame. It wasn't completely comfortable but I'm a freak and the rest of you normal sized people will fit in it just fine. The frame's monitor support is particularly strong and can easily bear weight greater than 100 kg and is appropriately positioned approximately 70cm from your eyes - about the same viewing distance of a desktop monitor. The default wheel performed well and being mounted to the frame, seemed sturdier. Solidly mounted pedals were also a lot more pleasant to



use since they didn't creep around the floor. Another nicety is front located casters so the frame can be easily moved wheel-barrow style.

Due to the price, this racing frame won't appeal to everyone

but is a race-sim enthusiast's dream come true. In fact, so impressed was Jason Bargwana of the Valvoline/Cummings Commodore team that after his first use he instantly ordered one.

Jere Lawrence

Price: \$995

Distributor: Reality Systems

URL: www.reality-systems.com.au

Phone: (02) 9632 5921

Highly customisable, this is a dream come true for racing enthusiasts but a little expensive for the rest of us.

SCORE

89

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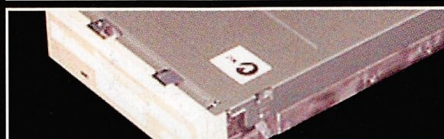
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Panasonic 3.5" Floppy

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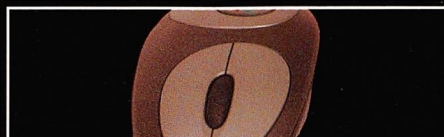
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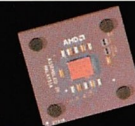
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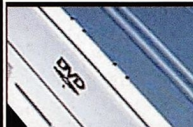
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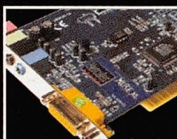
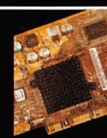
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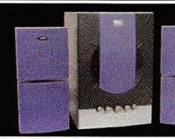
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SETUP

STUART CALVIN WAXES TECHNICAL

LETTER OF THE MONTH

What's the difference between all the Antialiasing settings? Especially between Quincunx, 4x and 4xS, and Anisotropic Filtering?

Goober

Good question from someone with the nick of "Goober". The mathematical model of an image is a continuous analogue signal which is sampled at discrete points (the pixel positions). When the sampling rate is less than the Nyquist Limit then there are aliasing artefacts, called "jaggies" in our lingo. OK, stay with me! Other common aliasing artefacts include disappearing or improperly rendered fine detail and disintegrating textures. Lines of pixels that perfectly fit the grid on a computer screen because they are horizontal, vertical or at 45 degrees cause no problem. Lines drawn at any other angle have to be approximated because they conflict with the natural grid and look stepped. Flight Sim gurus are used to seeing their aircraft wings with ragged edges like torn paper.

Anti-Aliasing

One of the most important techniques in making graphics and text easy to read and pleasing to the eye on-screen is anti-aliasing. AA increases spatial resolution through luminance modulation which is a fancy way of saying 'to use colour information to make up for a lack of screen resolution'. It's really a way of getting round the low 72-100 dpi resolution of the computer monitor and make objects appear as smooth as if they'd just stepped in front of you. What the Anti-Aliasing algorithms do is to simulate higher resolution by using colour information to trick our eye into seeing a smoother line or edge than the screen can physically allow. The opposite of "Anti-Aliasing" is

called Dithering. The goal is to create an optical trick that fools the eye into seeing a smoother shape, especially at a distance.

Full Scene Anti-Aliasing (FSAA)

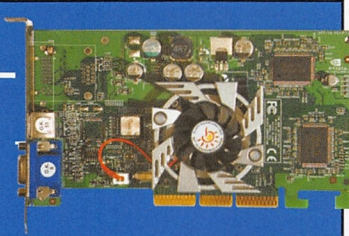
It requires a huge amount of fill rate to realise FSAA especially at a 4x setting. For each frame that is displayed a few more frames of the scene can be rendered into a 3D card's onboard video memory (frame buffer) and blended by shifting those frames against each other at sub-pixel level. The other, more classical approach is to render the frame at a higher resolution and then sample it down to the actual screen resolution by using something like bilinear filtering.

Quincunx

The Quincunx is an old mathematical device which, in a simplistic way, describes analogue sampling. Quin is a Latin root for five as the original Quincunx resembled a game-board that looked like the Roman Numeral "V". Five is important as we'll see.

Quincunx!

In a digital video system, a sampling structure is where the luminance and colour-difference samples are generated from pixels arranged on one of two congruent rectilinear grids. Quincunx! Antialiasing or Multi Sampling Full Scene Anti Aliasing is a patented antialiasing technique first properly enabled by the GeForce3 GPU. Quincunx! AA offers the quality of the slower 4x AA mode at very near the performance of the faster 2x mode. It generates the final anti-aliased pixel by filtering 5 pixels of only two samples. The effect of Quincunx! is an anti-aliasing effect



that comes close to the quality of 4x AA, but it only requires the generation of two samples. Here's how it works: Quincunx! 'looks' at the surrounding pixels, and interpolates how it should smooth the jaggies. This is all performed in hardware, and the performance hit is minimal. The 3D-scene is rendered normally, but the Pixel Shader is storing each pixel twice in two different locations of the frame buffer. By the time the last pixel of the frame has been rendered, the engine of a GeForce3 virtually shifts the one sample buffer half a pixel in x and y direction. This has the effect that each pixel of the 'first' sample is surrounded by four pixels of the second sample that are less than a pixel away from it in diagonal direction. The Quincunx! filters over those five pixels to create the anti-aliased pixel. (Aaarrgh! My eyes exploded! - Ed)

Anisotropic Filtering

Anisotropic means non-uniform shape and is a filtering technique that works on non-uniform, or uneven, shaped areas. In reality, when the viewpoint is such that a surface is seen square on, the surface is elliptical in shape. Anisotropic texture filtering calculates the shape of this ellipse and maps it onto the required texture. Of course the price one pays for using varying degrees of anti-jagging and filtering is decreased performance. However, there are instances when a balance between image quality and performance can be reached. A little experimentation is all that's required

Network 4 Two

Thanks for Masters of Orion 2 for free the other month. But, is there any way to make multiplayer stable when using two computers? I find that using a COM port cable is fairly reliable, using IPX always crashes and the DOS version is very unstable as well. Most of the time the game runs smoothly but sometimes it just hangs in between turns and requires a restart to keep going. Is this just a problem I'm having or is there some trick to making the game stable?

Allan Mills

You have a network problem. Um, do you have network cards? No? Dash out and get a pair of 10/100 cheapies for \$50-\$60. Uninstall all network protocols and then install the cards. Get the PCs working on a twisted pair, cross-over cable using TCP/IP before trying the other protocols. Home LaNfRaGGing is wOOT so I'd recommend buying a NetComm or NetGear 'party pack' comprising 10/100 cards, a switch with patch cables and other goodies.

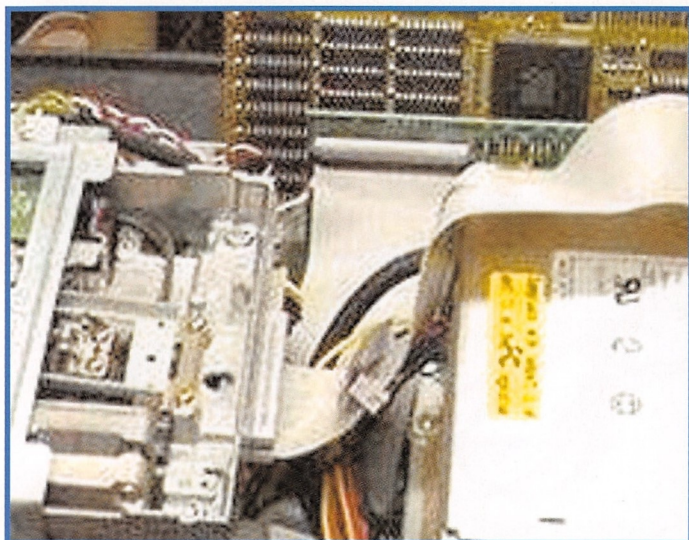
No OK, is OK

What does it mean when the BIOS POST shows your RAM size but doesn't say OK? My old machine would only say OK after restarting from DOS. If I restarted from Windows it only shows the RAM size and not the OK. What are the pros and cons if I change from FAT32 to NTFS (XP)? I am worried other PCs on a network won't be able to see and access files if I change to NTFS and I won't be able to use certain software.

Jason

If you cold boot then you'll see the whole POST (as much as you can observe anyway) including the RAM check. Older boards and specific BIOS chips give the "OK" message. A warm boot doesn't require all POST routines and does not do the RAM check. Win9x versions cannot 'see' NTFS partitions. Look at it this way, if you have a big (120GB) USB-connected, NTFS formatted disk drive that you use for portability off an NTFS XP rig (leeching at LANs for example) and plug it into a Win9x box, you won't be able to see the files on the portable drive. So, all you can do is create a FAT partition on the XP box or any NTFS formatted drive for sharing files





with non-NTFS 'aware' gear on the network. However, NTFS offers better file storage and security than FAT.

It's About Money

I've been wondering for a while now about the speed of processors, in the way in which an Athlon XP 1.4GHz differs from a Athlon XP 1.5GHz, is there a modification in the CPU that allows this speed increase or is there a hidden way that they set the default clock speed different from each other. Every month a new processor is released that is slightly faster, making a new high end chip at a higher price, please tell me the reason of this...

Platipusa

The speed of a chip is decided by the manufacturer after testing and is 'hard wired' into the core. The silicon wafers, housing the core and its transistors, are initially designed at one speed but often end up with faster chips as through-life technology improves which costs money. The wafers that currently house the 478 pin Celeron 1.7GHz core will probably house the 2GHz Celeron core, eventually. This means that you may be able to successfully clock a late production 1.7GHz chip somewhere near 2GHz using the FSB settings. And so Overclocking rears its ugly head!

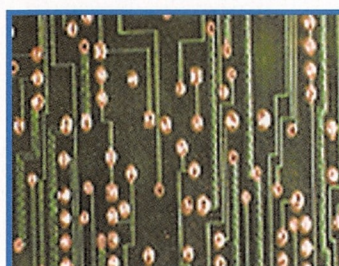
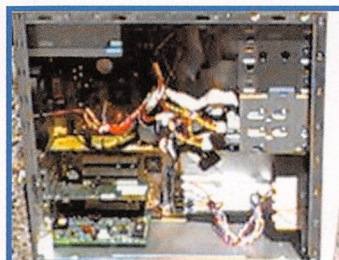
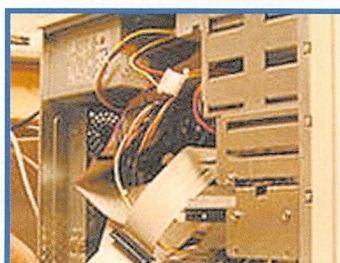
Svchost Problems

I purchase the DVD version of your great mag every week and always find the Tech Sections extremely useful but this problem has me stumped and I can't seem to find a solution. After about 45 minutes of being connected to the internet my PC's CPU usage

goes through the roof and CPU idle which I have running, drops right away. When I check the task manager it says a "copy svchost is utilising about 50% or greater of my CPU usage". This continues even after disconnecting from the internet.

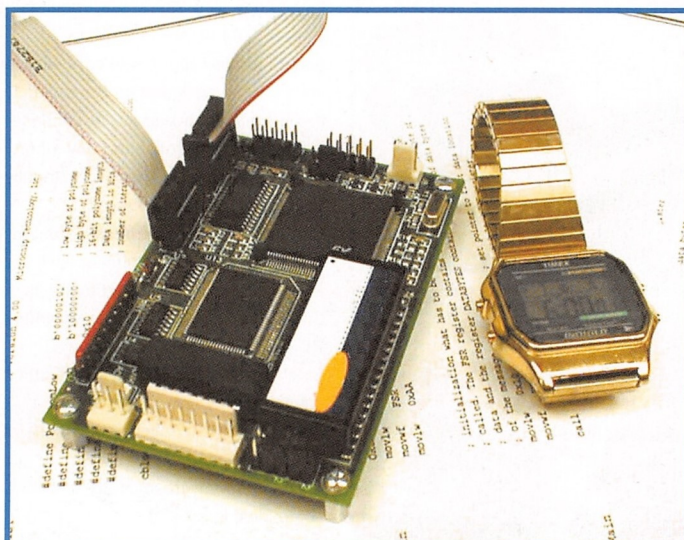
Peter Wilson

This is a Win2K issue, so I hope that's your OS! SVCHOST.EXE is a generic host process name for services that are run from dynamic-link libraries (DLLs). The Svchost.exe file is located in the %SystemRoot%\System32 folder. At startup, Svchost.exe checks the services portion of the registry to construct a list of services that it needs to load. There can be multiple instances of Svchost.exe running at the same time. Each Svchost.exe session can contain a grouping of services, so that separate services can be run depending on how and where Svchost.exe is



started. This allows for better control and debugging. Svchost.exe groups are identified in this registry key: HKEY_LOCAL_MACHINE\Software\Microsoft\Windows NT\CurrentVersion\Svchost

To view the list of services that are running in Svchost: from the Win2K installation CD's Support\Tools folder, extract the Tlist.exe utility from the support.cab file. On the Start menu, click Run, and then type cmd. Change folders to the location from which you extracted the Tlist.exe utility. Type tlist -s which will display a list of active processes. The -s switch shows the list of active services in each process. One of these processes is a memory leaker and you'll need to identify it and its parent application, and hopefully patch it from the developer's website. Suspect your modem drivers first and check for updates, then back to gaming!



SAY WHAT?!

Some of the terminology you guys use is beyond me. I am a 32 yo trying my best to keep up with the "lingo" but if I'm going to understand what you guys are writing about I need to know some of the "phrases" you guys use. So for all us "oldies" out there how about doing a glossary of some sort in your next issue. Here's a start for ya...what does "overclocking" mean and what the hell is dr claw talking about when he says "133+" all the time? I know it's probably a very trivial question but I am sure there're some liked-minded people who would appreciate it.

Too-young-to-play-lawn-bowls Matt

Matt, you're not an old guy in the world of gaming - believe me. A glossary in a gaming mag means fewer words for Reviews, but I'll throw in some Words of the Month from now on. Much of the lingo like "133+" and "haxor" is taken from technical specifications and standards documents, generally people want to convey feelings of coolness or superiority (Wuh? - Ed). "w00t", on the other hand, is an acronym for Wonderful Loot and now means "shit that was fun" or "wow". "n00b" is a play on 'New Boy' or 'newbie' ('sprog' if you're militarily inclined) with the capitalised letters "OO" exemplifying that wide eyed look. Overclocking means 'make stuff run faster (and hotter) than the manufacturer said it could'. The decimal number -559 038 737 has #DEADBEEF as its hexadecimal representation, maybe you could make something out of that and let us know? Oh, btw (by the way), I have no idea what dr claw talks about either and the Editor accuses me of being too homey!

SETUP

STUART CALVIN WAXES TECHNICAL

Network Grief

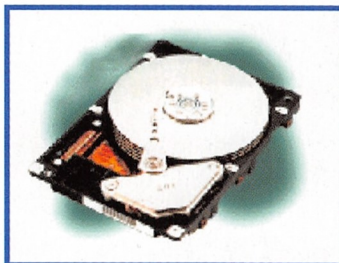
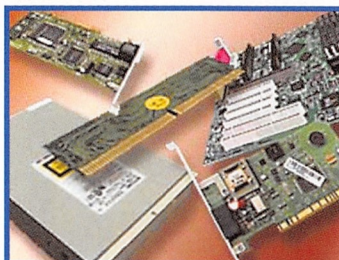
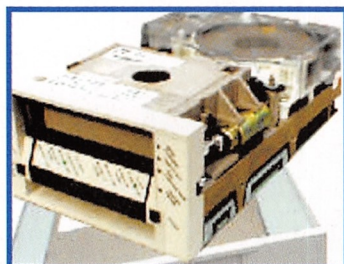
I have three PCs, one running WinXP Pro and two running WinMe. The XP PC has a modem and I am running ICS for the other two PCs which works fine. The problem is that the two WinMe rigs can not see the shared drive on the XP box but it can see the drive on the WinMe PCs. I have tried searching for the XP PC in the LAN. All have the same workgroup and all games work fine on LAN. All have TCP/IP, IPX and NetBIOS and they connect by an 8-port switch. I think it got something to do with permission from XP but I tried adding a guest account with no password still no good. I built all PCs from scratch all software is up to date including the operating systems.

Zom_au

Is the XP Pro PC visible in the Neighborhood thingy? Have you pinged? If you're using DHCP then ping [name of PC] in a DOS box. If you've allocated an IP then ping [client IP] from the Host. Make sure you have a contiguous sub-net mask of 255.255.255.0 for all PCs. All working? Alrighty, if you have NTFS on the XP box (there's FAT on the ME systems), you have to give me a month's wage or smack yourself silly, OK? The XP Pro shared drive/partition/folder has to be in FAT 16/32 format for the Win9x systems to see it.

Willy is Wonky

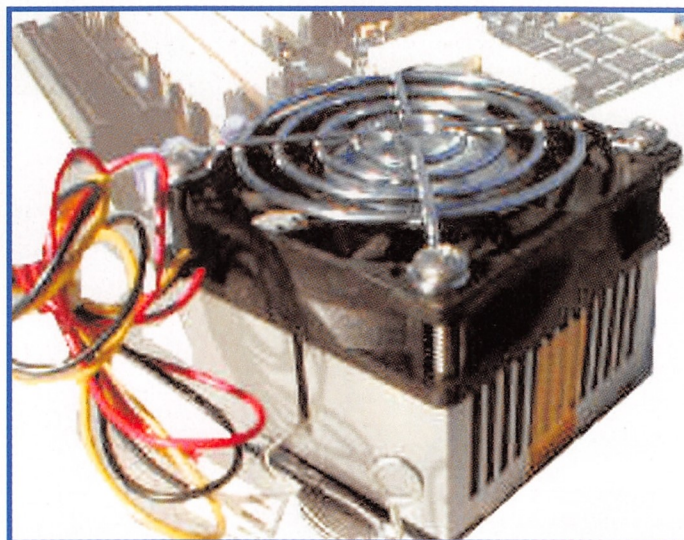
I have a USB MS Sidewinder joystick and a USB Ferrari 360 Modena Pro. When I have both of them plugged in they seem to interfere with each



other, so therefore, each time I need to use the other I have to crawl behind the PC and swap over. I am using WinXP. Is there a way that I can have both plugged in and be able to maybe switch from one to the other?

Willy

You can buy a USB hub relatively cheaply, to hot swap, but there is a fundamental issue at stake. Some games just don't work as expected with USB game controllers. Check each game publisher's website to see if a software update is available. Go to MS KB Article Q285877 and check all the HID/USB files listed, fix if necessary. While no drivers are required for the steering wheel (fully compliant with the "Human Interface Device" - HID, specifications) the DirectX drivers provided by Microsoft should ensure perfect compatibility with any games using DirectX technology. The Sidewinder requires DirectX 7.0a or later, too. Many games require your game controller, in use, to be assigned as Controller 1. If you switch between a SideWinder digital game controller and any other game controller, you need to manually reassign the other device as Controller ID 1 each time you want to use it. If your game controller isn't responding, you may need to set its Controller ID to 1. If you use another PC game controller after using a SideWinder game controller, the other controller may not work unless you reassign it to controller ID 1. If none of this works, go here <http://support.microsoft.com/> and do some looking around.



Uninstalling Games

I purchased MOHAA many weeks ago and have had many hours of happiness playing the game. It doesn't get boring but I have been trying to free some space on my computer. As soon as I click on uninstall it says maintenance program for MOHAA and I try and uninstall but it doesn't, so what do I do?

Brandt

Yep, space is a real concern sometimes. Often, games provide the option for "Repair" or "Modify" when you choose setup.exe off the CD-ROM. If you've got the time, choose "Repair" and after this, the uninstall routine will be able to work.

Coasters...

I am experiencing some hair tearing problems with my PC with backing up some of my game discs. I have an Athlon TB 900, and am currently running WinXP Pro. I have the latest firmware for my burner (a Yamaha 2100ez), the latest ASPI files, the latest copies of both CloneCD and ClonyXXL, the latest VIA 4in1 drivers and yet I keep getting an error message after about 10% into the burn. I have already disabled the IMAPI in admin services. The error message is:

Hardware error: no additional sense information (4.0 x 08:0 x 03)

Mad Goldfish

...and more coasters

I have recently bought a Liteon LTR 2410B burner (Nero 5.5 software). I am having trouble backing up my

original games like GTA3, Warcraft 3 and Max Payne. It just gets stuck and slows right down in between the burning process and doesn't burn properly.

Are there any cracks available?

Sean Maloney

Mad Goldfish's problem is a standard Multi Media Command-Set error code and, simply, it means a buffer underrun. Nice burner though, shame it can't defeat SafeDisc 2 and has no

Robbed!

If you ever formatted a 2.1 GB disk, which were popular in the mid to late 1990s, you probably didn't notice or didn't care that it actually formatted to a Windows/DOS reported 1.96 GB (it's just the file system, I hear you say). When I formatted a 120 GB Western Digital disk in FAT32 recently for a PCPP hardware test, Windows reported 111.76 GB. (FDISK reported 47 GB but that's another known issue.) What's happened? Have we lost space somehow? No, not at all, because it was never there in the first place. A 120 GB disk should be advertised as a 111 GB disk. Disk manufacturers use 'decimal' bytes (1000 MB = 1 GB) rather than binary bytes (1024 MB = 1 GB) and operating systems calculate space using the 1024 figure. If we take the supposed 120,000 MB on a 120GB disk and divide by 1024, we get 114,490.92 MB; divide again by 1024 and you get the real binary capacity of 111.76 GB. Damn marketing people!

buffer underrun protection. You'd just have to smack yourself in the head when you realise that another burner, like Sean's below, for a third of the price can do more stuff. Please check that you have Firmware Revision 1.0h or later.

Sean, PCPP #74 covered a lot of ground about burning in general. Your Firmware should be 5s07 or later. Many 24B model owners backflash to 5s07 which is the most reliable. Make sure DMA is enabled in Device Manager. Don't copy on the fly unless you use a Toshiba or Liteon DVD-ROM as a reader. Update your ASPI drivers to at least 4.60 from Adaptec. Use 40 pin/80 wire IDE cables with the blue/grey/black connectors on your ATA66+ disks. Nero will backup copy protected game discs if you use the DAO write option but I recommend CloneCD and Blindwrite for your purposes. Good help available at www.cdfreaks.com

Both of you and everyone else, defrag your target disk for images, switch off any daemons (ICQ, MSN, Email or print handlers) as well as any background processes. Close everything in the System Tray except Explorer and CloneCD. Disable your anti-virus program and turn off MSOffice's Fast Find. Upgrade to CloneCD 4.0.1.9 and delete Clony XXL from your system, you don't need it, just use the default CloneCD profiles, google for YaPS and use it if necessary. Purchase the fastest CD-Rs you can find and good luck!

XP and DOS

I have heard that you can't install DOS games on WinXP. Now, I don't actually want to play the games from DOS, as I use doom legacy and winquake to play from Windows, but I still want to install them. Is this possible, and if not, is there a program I can use to do this? PS Your Tech section is the best it has ever been, keep up the great work.

Brett Carter

DOS can be 'emulated', in a way, from within XP by context sensitive menus (right-click) off the shortcut to the game. Most DOS based games seem to work, however, I know that Jill of the Jungle, doesn't (Consarnit! - Ed).

PC System Questions

A quick round up of the Qs everyone seems to need A-ed

I get regular "What do you recommend?" questions and I'd love to answer them all here or personally but since I took over Setup the number of reader enquiries each month has exploded! To all those who have not received a personal reply, my apologies. I'm going to cover a few popular matters in this special multi-reader response.

While it's easy to assemble a good all-purpose rig based around a Celeron/Duron 1GHz+, board to suit, matching 256MB RAM and say a GeForce2 MX400 for about \$1000 (maybe less!), many readers have between three and four thousand dollars to spend. \$4K is an ideal amount, well above a half-decent budget rig price but well below The Beast. What to do? Dollars buy you quality but you need to consider future-proofing as well.

Case, monitor, CPU, MoBo, graphics adaptor and RAM should be between 55% and 70% of your budget. Pierre Lefebvre from Canberra had \$4K to spend and I recommended these items for 64% of budget:

- Lian Li PC60 \$350 and Heroichi (HEC) 400W PSU \$150
- Hitachi CM721F 19", \$695 and GeForce4 460MX \$335
- AthlonXP 2100+ with HSF \$400 and ABIT KX7-333R mobo \$310
- Corsair 512MB XMS2700 DDR CL2 \$310

A faster videocard could be afforded if you change to CL2.5 RAM and an Athlon XP2000+ CPU. Thomas McMurchy, among others, had \$3K for a gaming rig. Here's 66% of budget:

- Lian Li PC60 USB \$350 and HEC 350W PSU \$110
- Hitachi CM621F 17" \$400 and GeForce4 440MX \$230
- Athlon XP2000+ \$330 and ABIT KR7A-RAID KT266A mobo \$250
- Kingston 512MB PC-2100 DDR RAM \$280

Here's some tips:

Pick your chip and then consider a board that starts at or just below your chip speed: the two have to be matched! Don't accept integrated video but integrated sound is fine and it comes on many boards these days. Ensure that the board is AGP 2.0 (4x) compliant but is backward compatible to AGP 1.0 if possible.

Consider name-brand RAM: Kingston and Corsair are freely available in Australia and if you're serious, purchase PC133/150 CL2 or CL2.5 DDR sticks. Check out last month's LOTM.

Buy an AGP 2.0 graphics adaptor but ensure your mobo is compliant: the average reader should look at the GeForce4 MX range. Semi-serious dudes should look at the Ti range. LaNfReAKs need to spend up to a thousand dollars on the videocard. Meanwhile, big budget sound systems have to come on top of your initial budget.

Four gees will get you a machine, a decent 19" monitor, maybe a 21" if you forego something else whereas \$3K will get you a machine with a very good 17" screen.

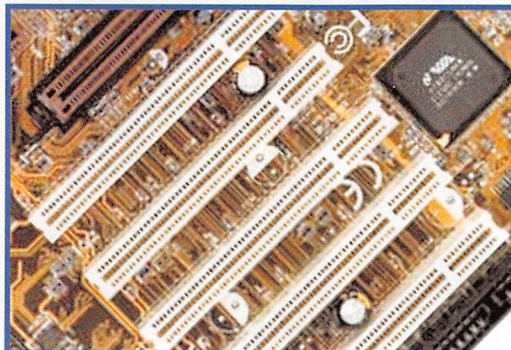
Sean Watkins and his brother presented me with a list of gear for a \$2K rig which I thought was pretty darn good. Damien Boylson also asked about upgrading his Pentium 4 and I'm sure some of the items and tips I've mentioned will help him out. Campbell

Simpson needed help with a graphics adaptor and was on the right track with GeForce4 range. Illuminated055 had \$700 to blow so I suggest a high-end 64MB adaptor or a low end 128MB card - the ATI Radeon 8500 64MB DDR AGP with DVI Support is worth a look. To Brendan Giles, yes, many new DDR boards will suck if you only have an Athlon Thunderbird, so you should grab an AthlonXP. Ben Annett got a mobo (that means Motherboard, Ben) with integrated video, no big problem, just save up for an AGP card.

Digisound

I have also received many questions about digital sound connectivity after the recent S/PDIF LOTM. If you're serious about going digital from the player to the speakers, you have to research the soundcard and speaker system. The soundcard has to have a 'standard' S/PDIF_OUT socket in RCA or TOSLink format. The cheaters, like the SB Audigy DE have a proprietary phono socket which requires a special Creative lead and it's not really true digital standard. The speaker system has to have a corresponding S/PDIF_IN socket, somewhere, for interconnectivity. Commonly, the speakers themselves are connected to a 'break-out' control box by 75 ohm digital RCA connectors. Expensive systems are all optical TOSLink module connections. Robert Woods, do your research and look around! I replied to Pete of 'clicking' RAID drive fame, but I've heard nothing since so I imagine his RAID array failed sooner rather than later!

Some inquiries, I'm sure, have to be a setup (no pun intended) because the questions are so ludicrous I can only suggest they box up their PC and return it, because they're too silly to be allowed near one.



ORACLE

Write to the Oracle at:

The Oracle
PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St
Redfern
NSW 2016

oracle@pcpowerplay.com.au

Icewind Dale

Hi.

In the last bit of the Vale of Shadows, there's a door with an image of some gears on either side. It states "These gears seem to be in almost new condition. There are no signs of rust or age that you can see. However, they do not seem to work. Perhaps there is a switch to activate them."

Well I can't find this switch. I've been everywhere, so I guess it has to be quite small. Any help is appreciated, otherwise it looks like I'll have to buy the official hint book.

**Jeremy Menzies,
Wallsend.**

Buy a hint book when the mighty Oracle is at hand? Oh ye of little faith! Save your moolah for something useful, like beer. The switch can only be seen when you have the stone with a wolf's paw print on it in your possession. This is found on the bit of body in the room to the left of this large room, past some trapped stairs and two weights. You can't operate the switch until you've got that stone. Now, the

So you want crabby huh? Nice Oracle not good enough for you huh? Never have I had to deal with such a bunch of lousy letters as this month. What's got into you? I've had better mail from those Art Union house lotteries on the Gold Coast. Better mail from the ski n' surf warehouse down the road that's closing down. Bah, phear my uberness.

switch is found on the pillar that is farthest away from the door itself. Look for it on the door side of the pillar. It is tricky to find, given the lighting in the room.

Baldur's Gate 2

I'm stuck in Spellhold, the first dungeon of the building where Bodhi and Irenicus leave you and where I was betrayed by Yoshimo. To exit the first dungeon I need the hand of a vampire and a crystal shard. I've got the hand but I can't find the damned SHARD that you're supposed to pick off the kobolds.

I've killed every single kobold and I've examined every pixel of the dungeon.

PLEASE do not tell me that I have wasted all these months!

**Tony,
Richmond**

Firstly, the Oracle says that you will NEVER waste time playing games. However you are a bit of a loser for not getting this one. What a picture of frustration you paint. I can just see you banging the desk, swearing and getting all bent out of shape. Ever seen the cartoon



Stressed Eric? That aneurysm about to burst yet? Tony, I don't know whether you're going to laugh or weep when you read the answer. It's so simple, it's been staring right at your mug all the time. Once you've killed all the kobolds that the crystal summons, just click on the big crystal in the centre of the kobald room and you'll get a piece of it. Hehe, what colour is red, Tony?

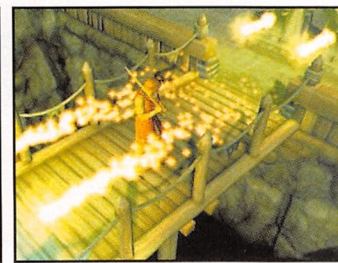
I'm feeling sorry for you - so go onto the southwest passage to where that big giant statue head

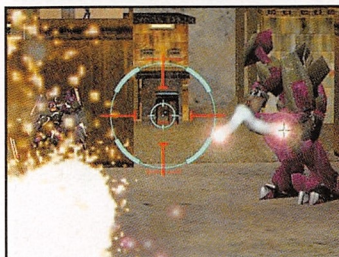
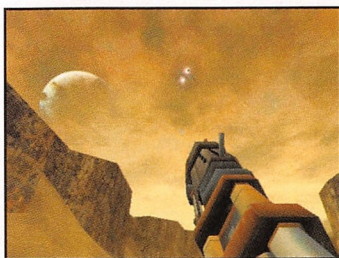
is. Talk to it now that you've got that crystal shard and the hand from the vampire Dace. Everyone gets some sweet experience for this. The head opens its mouth and you can enter the door behind it to get to the next level.

Shogo: Mobile Armour Division

I need help I'm stuck on the last level of Shogo please tell me how to kill Gabriel and Ryo.

**Peter Keshish
Melbourne**





Do you want the easy almost "cheatin'" way or the draw it out for a long fight way? Oracle will give you both.

Easy way to kill Gabriel

if you're the lazy cheatin' type:

Reverse back towards the door you came in, once you're right up against the door, shoot Gabriel and he'll then start coming towards you. You are now underneath a small ledge though, so his sword can't hit you. This means you can knock out his shield by hitting the power source, before knocking him out. The sniper is the easiest weapon to take out the power source. Then change weapons and Shredder him to death or take him out with a few Bullguts. Beware that the Bullguts can also damage you if he's close enough.

Long, drawn out approach

Run around the perimeter of the arena taking shots at the power source before taking him out. Use your weapon that has the time-delay mines, (make sure you've stored up enough of them). After you've softened up the power source a bit, lob some of the mines at it. Then quickly switch to the Shredder and use that on the big guy, fire as many rounds as you can, then run around again. Repeat as often as needed. This can take a while but if you don't want to finish the game too soon, then this will draw it out some. Plus you'll have that smug glow from finishing the game without cheatin'.

To take out Ryo

A few rounds from the Big Red Nasty is highly recommended.

CODE

The Oracle shows you how to squeeze out every ounce of gaming goodness from your favourite games.

Spiderman The Movie

Character Skins

Enter these codes in the specials menu to play as the desired character:

HERMANSCHULTZ:

Play as The Shocker

GIRLNEXTDOOR:

Play as Mary Jane

REALHERO:

Play as a police officer

CAPTAINSTACEY:

Play as a helicopter pilot

SERUM:

Play as a scientist

KNUCKLES:

Play as thug model 1

STICKYRICE:

Play as thug model 2

THUGSRUS:

Play as thug model 3

ORGANICWEBBING:

Gives unlimited webbing.

JOELSPEANUTS:

Turn on Big Head mode.

SPIDERBYTE:

Shrink Spider-Man to half size.

KOALA:

Unlocks all combat moves.

HEADEXPLODY:

Unlocks Bowling game in Training.

GOESTOYOURHEAD:

Big head.

UNDERTHEMASK:

Play in first person mode.

CHILLOUT:

Goblin's glider never overheats.

ARACHNID and IMIARMAS:

Unlocks all levels, FMV sequences and gallery pictures. A laugh confirm the code is entered correctly. To return to as you were, re-enter the code.

DODGETHIS:

Slows everything down in combat.

To Unlock the Green Goblin:

Beat the game on "Hero" mode. Now enter the secret store to turn on this feature. If you start a new game, you can play as Harry Osborne and the dialogue for many characters will be changed.

To fight Bonesaw, defeat at least 60 enemies in basic training mode.

Mechwarrior 4

Press and hold Control, Alt and Shift and type these codes:

Cheat Code- Granted Wish

HF: Heat Tracking Off

IB: Destroy Enemy Mech

ML: Finish Mission with Success

IY: Invulnerability

UO: Unlimited Ammo



4X4 Evolution 2

Get Money

Start a race, then type "goldfinger". A horn will sound. Now simply type "givememoneyordie" to receive one million dollars.

A touch subtler

If 1 million bucks is too much, too fast, here's a subtle cash bonus.

Open the install directory default = c:/program files/Terminal Reality/4x4 Evo2/system/metal - and open the metal.ini file. Now, search for "cash" where you will find codes similar to the ones below "e.g., cash:hmG2Vjd1yCx0J!GtR6R(3cPqjb." Delete the code and ONLY the code then replace it with one of the codes from below.

\$300+ =

wzBDB8TUZHDPJrgtY13y8tQujKA

\$4335+ =

K7FVNF0aq(tM+(u*VhQ2vBrM*q2

\$1300+ =

PC+YDTUjopZ*V19P8784h7i(vj9

\$36+ =

hmG2Vjd1yCx0J!GtR6R(3cPqjb!

\$1700+ =

wF*aXUJuj3K37gsF*TRLOpwXH)2

Settlers 4

During play, press the Enter key and type !wqsa or !ympq. Press Enter again and type in the following codes:

!lose: Lose level

!incr: To receive more resources

!win: Win level

Time warp

If you press F12 during the game, one minute of time elapses for all players.

Indiana Jones and The Infernal Machine

Use F10 to bring up the console and enter the appropriate command for the cheat.

urgon elsa: All Weapons

taklit marion on: God Mode

toto: Machine Gun

deriver: No Clipping

azerim Sophia: Increase health

Warcraft 3: Reign of Chaos

To kill animals, keep clicking the mouse over them until they eventually explode.

Special Ending

Successfully complete the game on hard difficulty to see a 20 second clip of StarCraft 2 running under the WarCraft 3 engine.

Cheat Codes

While playing, press Enter and type any of the following "Codes", then press Enter again to activate the cheat.

iseedeadpeople: Full Map
allyourbasearebelongtous: Instant Victory

ORACLE



No One Lives Forever

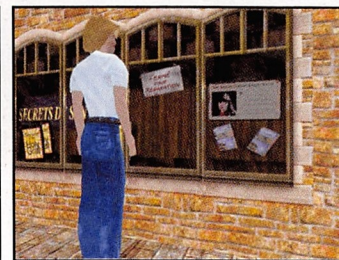
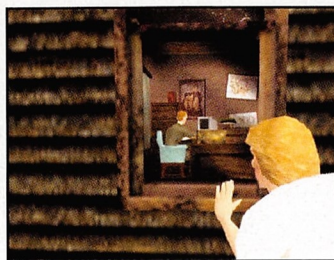
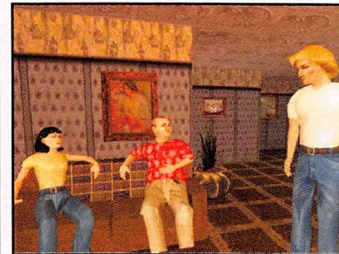
I can get through the entire game no probs except for scene 6 of safe cracker where you have to dodge all the infra red beams. I can get up to the last room before finishing the mission, but it looks like a solid infra red wall in there. please help so I can finish without cheats.

Davox

Well Davox, (who rhymes with Gravox – did you know that?) Once again I'm totally underwhelmed by this question. Still what's dead easy for The Oracle is usually Mensa material for you lot. So here's the answer – I'll give ya credit for getting through the third room though – those infrared lasers are a pain in the you know what. But when it comes to the fourth room, you're right. It is almost impossible. Instead think cunning. You're a

SPY and what does a spy do? Spies sneak. Spies think laterally. Keep thinking very, very laterally so that if you look down on the floor you'll see a grate between the third and fourth floors. Now this is what the cunning spy Cate Archer is thinking when she sees this grate: "Hmm, I bet I could climb down into that" and so proceeds to slip her lithe body into said opening, CRAWL under the room, safe from all those nasty infrared beams to the next grate. Look, she hasn't even messed up her hairdo! Exit into the safe then grab the intelligence items, photograph the letter with those nifty sunglasses. End of scene.

Note that I said the room was almost impossible to cross. It can be done, if you like being a sweating nervous wreck – just for a change. You have to wait until the long bottom laser goes to



you and far from you several times (about 6-7) and then make your way to the left, hugging the wall. At the end you jump onto the laser shelf and wait until that bottom laser goes under you. As soon as it turns and moves to the target door, jump back down, duck and follow the laser. At the end carefully jump above it – watch for the lasers above you – and go through the door. It will take a long time watching those lasers – nah, you'll never make it – forget it, go for the grate.

P.S. there's still a ton of missions to go after this. You're nowhere near the end.

Gabriel Knight 3, Blood of the Sacred, Blood of the Damned

Hello,
I am stuck in Day 1, 2-4pm. I need to get Mosely's passport in order to rent the bike. I've taken the coat, hat and made a fake moustache but I don't know how to steal Mosely's passport.

Dimitri T, Caldwell

Well Dimitri, it's not looking good – you've a long way to go in GK3 and you're already crawling to me for help. I'll hold your hand just this once, ok? To get the photo ID needed for renting the bike, go into the hotel and take a mint out of the dish that's near the left staircase. Head upstairs to Mosely's room and knock on the



door so he lets you in. Ask him about his passport and discover the boofhead keeps it in his right rear pocket. Leave his room and walk along until you see a painting of a street scene. Put the mint on the table beneath that painting then go back down stairs. When Jean leaves to do some errands around the hotel, take the marker off the desk, and be quick to push the 33 button on the panel next to the desk. This buzzes Mosely's room. Go up the right staircase, walk to the table where you put the mint, keeping it on the right, not the left side. Mosely, who has come out, will see the mint and become pre-occupied by it. Use the PICK-UP option on his back right pocket and Gabriel will get the passport. Mosely will leave without noticing anything. Ah, the powers of the breathmint! Go into your inventory and use the marker on Mosely's passport. You can now combine the rest of the disguise, jacket, moustache and hat to make the complete disguise. Give the disguise to Gabriel and go talk to Bigout to get that Harley.



Neverwinter Nights

In chapter 2, I have got the antidote for the Spirit of the Woods and I see the tree I'm supposed to cure but I can't use the Antidote on it or find anyplace to use it. Any guidance would be appreciated.

**Sarah Wilcoxon,
Bondi.**

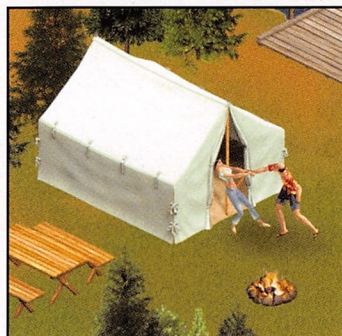
What you've got to do is talk to the deer, then you'll go on some hippie mind trip and when you come back you'll find you can use the antidote on the deer. Because Bambi and the tree are magically bonded, the tree will be healed. Aaw, that's so cute I think I'm going to vomit. Please tell me your character is not a tree-hugging hippy elf druid, I couldn't stand it.

Sims Vacation

I took two of my Sims camping, and now they can't get out of their tent! I saved the game after they went to bed, and when I came back to it later, they woke up, but won't leave the tent. No matter what I tell them to do or how I queue their actions, nothing works. I thought of removing the tent but build mode doesn't work either.

Danielle, Southport

Haha, maybe your Sims don't want to get out of the tent because they're sick and tired of the mindless drivel you're forcing them to do! If you must continue torturing these feeble pathetic souls then go back to the vacation screen as if you're going to build a new lot. Use the bulldozer tool to evict the little suckers - it will kick them back to the 'burbs they call home.



CODE

somebodysetupusthebomb:

Instant Defeat

thereisnospoon:

Unlimited Mana

whosyourdaddy:

Invincible

strengthandhonor:

Continue playing after losing in campaign mode

Screamer Rally

Toggle Visibility

Select championship mode and press [Enter] to choose from a car at the selection screen. Now press one of the following keys at the "Loading" screen. Repeat the code to disable its effect.

[Left Cursor]: Night

[Right Cursor]: Fog

Codes

Type these in at the main menu

TRAMO: All tracks

CARBO: All cars

LEALL: Access to all classes

Neverwinter Nights

In the NWN install directory (default=c:\neverwinter\nights\NWN) find the file "nwn.ini". Backup the file and then open it by just double clicking it. Under the "Game Options" section add the line

Debug Mode=1

Launch the game and while playing access the console with the ~ key and type "DebugMode 1" [Enter] (case sensitive) to enable cheat mode. Open the console again and press [Tab] to scroll through the debug commands. Enter one of the following case-sensitive codes to activate the corresponding cheat function. If you enter the code correctly, the message "Success" will appear. If the message "Entered Target Mode" appears, click on the desired character to apply the cheat.

dm_god: Invincibility

attribute SetCHA [number]: Set Charisma

SetSTR [number]:

Set Strength attribute

SetINT [number]:

Set Intelligence attribute

SetWIS [number]:

Set Wisdom attribute

SetCON [number]:

Set Constitution attribute

dm_givegold [number]:

Get indicated amount of gold

GiveXP [number]:

Get indicated amount of experience points



GetLevel [number]: Raise indicated number of levels

ModSaveFort: Set character's fortune save modifier

ModSaveReflex:

Set character's reflex save modifier

ModSaveWill:

Set character's will save modifier

ModSpellResistance [number]:

Set character's spell resistance modifier

SetAge [number]:

Set character's age

SetAttackBase [number]:

Set character's base attack

SetAppearance [race]:

Change character's race (human, elf, etc.)1

If you alter your character, load the "nwnplayer.ini" file in the game folder and set the following lines in order to continue past the module you are currently on:

Single Player Enforce Legal

Characters=0

Single Player

ItemLevelRestrictions=0

Easy custom items.

This cheat will take a medium investment of time and requires advanced user knowledge in the importing and exporting of characters.

Use the tool set included with the retail game to create a custom Module and then an Area. Export a character from any game (single or multi-player) and create items a low enough level so that your character can use them - the level of the item can be checked in Properties/General menu of the item. Warning: certain abilities will add a certain amount of Required Levels to the item. The easiest way is to use the create item wizard and create an item at your level but Godly quality. Make sure after you create the item it is identified by checking the appropriate field in the Properties/Properties menu. Once you have finished making the items, place them on the ground near to the start location for speedy access. Save the Module then run a Multiplayer server (nwserver.exe from the default install directory) and select your custom module from the New/CustomModule dropdown. Run NWN, Select Multiplayer, Join your local LAN game then join your custom map and pick up all the items you have made for your character. Exit the game and be sure to export your character when finished. To use the character in a single player game, start a new game and select the pre-generated characters check-box. Your twinkled up character will be ready to play.

Easy battles

An easy and effective strategy when fighting Bosses or other hard to kill creatures is to make them follow you until you reach an area transition door. Fight close to it and when your hit points are low, exit. The creature will not follow you through the door. Rest and save; then go back to fight. This trick will also work with normal doors but be careful, humanoid creatures can open non-area transition doors.

Mod Life

When out of the box just ain't enough

Ghost Recon Gangland

Los Angeles in the year 2009. Gangs have taken control of the streets and disorder now reigns. Drugs and prostitution are rife, gang warlords control the city, and organised hits, robbery and looting are commonplace. Gangland puts players into a gritty, confronting setting as members of LA's elite SWAT team seeking to regain control and restore some sense of order to the city. Whilst not exactly the most original scenario ever created, Gangland makes up for it in execution and detail.

Gangland offers four campaign-style missions, all of which use the same city map. While this might be a turn-off for some, the map is big enough to add variety. As events are randomly scripted, this too will add longevity. A more troubling issue is that really only two and half out of the four missions feel fully complete. The last mission in particular plays like a nasty, last minute add-on. Nonetheless, what is on offer in the good missions does impress. There are a host of new skins for the scum of the city you'll encounter, as well as a new arsenal of weapons (such as a very cool riot shotgun) to make sure you get your message of law and order across.



Audio tracks from the movies "Black Hawk Down" and "300 Miles to Graceland" are featured together with other tunes from the likes of The Prodigy and AC/DC. Together with some well-designed maps which are filled with burnt out cars, graffiti covered walls, and ransacked shops, this mod oozes plenty of atmosphere.

Players can choose to go it



alone or play in cooperative mode. The developers have promised an update which will allow players to reverse roles and play gang members taking on the LAPD, as well as team-based multiplayer mode involving different gangs and law enforcement agencies. A solid mod for Ghost Recon fans on the lookout for new theatres of combat.



4/5

For: Ghost Recon

Version: 1.0

Size: 49MB

URL: www.tacticalgames.net/monolith/



For: Half-life

Day of Defeat 3.0

Valve Software has had plenty of input into this hugely popular mod for Half-Life. The most significant feature is the introduction of round-based, single life games. With a WW2 Western Front-inspired theme, 10 maps and over 20 nifty weapons, version 3.0 is very much worth a look.

4/5



For: Half-life

Vampire Slayer

Players can choose to play as either Vampires or Slayers. Vampires possess heightened physical skills whilst Slayers have a greater assortment of weapons available to them. This latest version is much more stable and includes a host of quality new maps as well as improved bots.

3/5

with **Derek Lee**

Unreal Tournament Thievery

Before Looking Glass

Software pulled the plug on a much anticipated multiplayer mode for the Thief series, fans of the game were salivating more than a thief sizing up a job without a guard in sight. Although Thief III is presently in development, at this stage a multiplayer mode is still only a remote possibility. Thankfully, Thievery UT goes part of the way towards picking up the pieces and delivering a professional-quality mod that promises a lot more.

At this stage, only two game modes are available: Thieves vs Guards and Thiefmatch. The TvG pits a team of Thieves out to break into and loot a well-guarded location with a team of Guards obviously out to stop them. Thiefmatch sees players going it alone against AI guards to see how much loot they can acquire whilst eliminating rival thieves in the process.

The option to play as either Thieves or Guards adds plenty of variety to gameplay. By nature, Thieves will take a more stealthy approach and have fewer combat options available to them. Much like the original Thief games, they will still have available bows with an assortment of arrows with cool effects such as water arrows to douse torches and moss arrows



to smother the sound of footsteps. In contrast, Guards are able to adopt more direct methods and possess a more formidable selection of weapons, but must constantly be wary of traps and surprise attacks. It's a classic hide-and-seek game played with deadly consequences. As a result, gameplay is often slow but always intense and nerve-racking.

The 11 maps on offer are all



well designed and feature some quality textures and modelling and are filled with detail to add to the brooding medieval setting. The interface is clean and easy to navigate with a clever light gem (which changes shade) to indicate how well hidden a thief is. Perhaps the biggest compliment that can be paid to Thievery UT is that it more than does justice to the original Thief series.



5/5

For: Unreal Tournament

Version: 1.1

Size: 122 MB (+ 12MB patch)

URL: www.thieveryut.com

For: Unreal Tournament

The Third Reich

The Third Reich, a total conversion for UT, is still in the early stages of development but showing promising signs. The focus will be multiplayer, presumably with different classes, although there will also be a single player campaign mode. WW2 buffs start salivating.

N/A



For: Unreal Tournament 2003

Vietnam: Mangled Horizon

This total conversion, while still in early development stages, looks promising. Realism is the focus, and if the background detail and research evidenced is any indication, this one could be huge. Combat will be squad-based with a range of NPCs utilising experience points each tour of duty.

N/A

DVD GUIDE

As shrewd readers would have noticed, last issue was the sixth DVD PowerPlay, making the new coverdisc exactly half a year old! So this is lucky number seven. A quick update for y'all: DVD PowerPlay is going great guns and you, our most valued readers, have been quick to embrace it. Folks are buying it in the shops and subscribers are converting from CD to DVD just as quick as they can sort out all the complicated IDE permissions on their new DVD-ROM drives.

Seven DVDs, seven free anime episodes from Madman, five free games, more than 32 gigabytes of tasty stuff for you. And big thanks to ROM and all the guys on the PCPP forums who have trawled the Net for hours to bring you all the goodies in ROM'S Bunker each month. We've simply lost count of the number of wallpapers, maps, bots, scenarios and other items that ROM has tirelessly worked to bring you, so the best way to show your appreciation is to log on to the forums at www.pcpowerplay.com.au/forums, head into the DVD PowerPlay section, and request even more stuff!

Enough grandstanding then, and on with the show. This month, Madman has given us something a little different, we finally worked out the kinks in the C&C install for the NOD missions, America's Army - the game everyone is talking about - makes an appearance, and we've thrown on a few extra demos as well as the full contents of CD PowerPlay as always.

Clearly, DVD is not only the future, it's the present! So why not flip back to the subscriptions page (p34) and make a present of six months of DVD PowerPlay to a close friend? Use it to win girls. Or boys. Or whatever. Just do what feels natural damnit!

Paul Noone
DVD Producer
dvdgod@next.com.au



FREE ANIME! Love Hina

Distributor: Madman

Duration: 22 Minutes

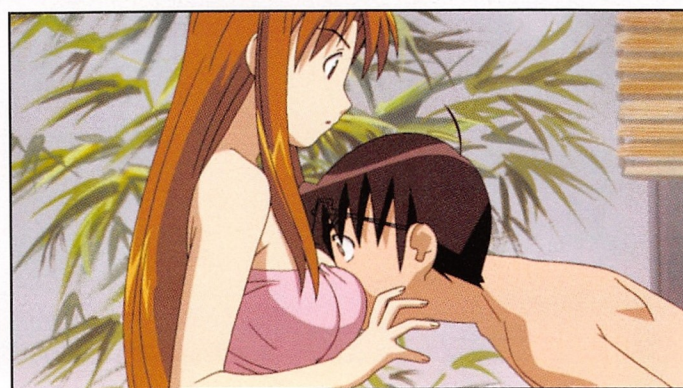
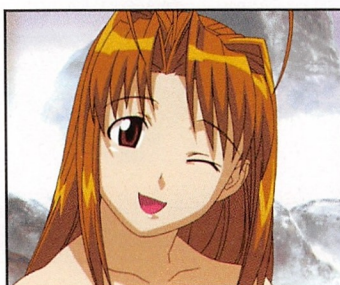
Notes: Works on set-top DVD player or on a PC with software DVD player installed

Something a little different for you this month, from the princes of Japanese toon-on-toon action, Madman Entertainment. Firstly though, concerned parents, don't let the accompanying screenshots disturb you - this isn't prOn, it's just charming, innocent romantic comedy. Why would we be interested in romantic comedy? Because this is anime-style romantic comedy, not Meg Ryan romantic comedy which should have a UN Charter taken out against it.

Imagine it; you are a young man, alone in a new city, newly arrived to your grandmother's apartment complex, only to find it completely overrun by nubile young women! And naturally, they hate you! Will this young man manage to fulfill his promise to

his childhood sweetheart and enter Tokyo University? (Some promise, lover-boy) Will the female occupants of the apartment complex tear him to pieces? Will the fan service drown us all in a lake of nervous, adolescent tumescence? Only those brave enough to watch Love Hina will ever know for sure.

Giant robots and vampire princesses will resume next month, as usual.



DVD POWERPLAY DEMOS



MEDIEVAL: TOTAL WAR

Read the review, play the game!

Developer: Creative Assembly
Distributor: Activision
Notes: Bust loose in this one-map demo featuring hundreds of units!

If Steve's glowing praise on page 60 isn't enough to convince you, then have a crack at this demo of Medieval for further evidence that this is simply THE hardcore wargame that all the cool kids are playing this summer. Winter. Whatever season we happen to be in at the moment. Take the field, be the man, kill some horses. It rocks!

Need: P3-667, 64MB RAM, 32MB Videocard, 500MB HDD



AMERICA'S ARMY

What the hell are they on about?

Developer: US Military
Distributor: Online
Notes: A whole free game! Pity it's so yankee and online only...

Yes, it's the latest recruiting drive for the world's scariest armed forces, the mighty US Army. Take the field as a lowly GI and train your 'ass' until you're so 133+ the Republican Guard starts building its own POW camps before you even get there. Play online against thousands! You could be the next Mel Gibson! Or something.

Need: ISP connection, 64MB RAM, 32MB Video, 200MB HDD



MAGIC: ONLINE

The geek shall inherit the Earth

Developer: Wizards of the Coast
Distributor: Wizards of the Coast
Notes: Simulated trading card combat never tasted so good!

Admit it, back in Year 9 all you did was sit the library and play Magic over and over and over. Admit you had a massive, 360 card deck with all the sick monsters we here at PCPP don't even WANT to know the names of. Admit your most treasured possession is a limited edition Odyssey land card, with the shiny edges. Now play it online. You horrible geek.

Need: Phat ISP pipe, P3-450, 64MB RAM, 8MB Videocard



Q3A 1.31 POINT RELEASE

Will this shut you up at last?

Developer: id software
Distributor: Online
Notes: Finally, you can all play together nicely

Okay okay, so it turns out we never actually put this vital patch on the CD. Sorry, we've suitably chastised ourselves by letting Crash beat us on I Can Win mode. Q3A is still the DM game of choice here in the PCPP offices, and 1700h is now forever known as "Quake 3 o'clock". And yes, the Editor usually wins, but it's not from lack of trying. Damn you Nacho Man!

Need: Q3A and a machine capable of running it

DVD POWERPLAY MODS PLUS

ROM'S BUNKER

Where all the goodness is!

Developer: PCPP's own ROM!
Distributor: ROM again!
Notes: So much stuff, such a big bunker, where does it all come from?

A little time out here to show our gratitude to the Really Old Man, ROM, number 1 fan and caretaker of the bunker. This month, heaps of maps, skins, bots, wallpapers, themes, free games, sounds, crazy crap that no one really knows how to describe and trailers. But then, the Bunker is like that every month. It's fab, basically. Get into it!

Need: Patience, an eye for detail, and an insatiable desire to be astounded



DAY OF DEFEAT 3.0

Be warned, It's only a Beta!

Developer: Team DOD
Distributor: Online
Note: It's for Half-Life dontcheknow

If there's one mod besides Counter-Strike that we get constant, irritating demands for, it's Day of Defeat. WW2 style combat, bucketloads of new weapons and models, and a decent installed user-base means you can find a server and join a hapless band of dogfaces and get slaughtered by Koreans. Such is life!

Need: Half-Life, latest patch, machine capable of running it.



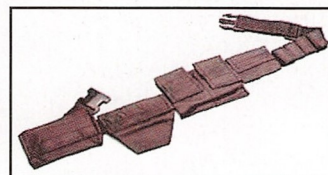
THIEVERY UT

Another Beta, but a sweet one!

Developer: Some guy
Distributor: Online
Notes: Turn .UT into Thief!

Thief is great as a singleplayer game, but the Dark Engine just can't quite handle team-based multiplayer. Plus Looking Glass didn't put it in. Fortunately then, some plucky lads and lasses have converted Unreal Tournament into the ultimate Thief-fan's wet dream. Team-based Thievery! Get into it now!

Need: U T, latest patch, knowledge of Thief series



UTILITIES

That's right, they're baaack!

Developer: Everyone!
Distributor: Online
Notes: Keep your PC ship-shape

The utilities are back. Sweet as ever. Gorge yourself on the latest DivX codecs, Hypersnap 4.2 for all your screen capture needs, GetRight for the prOn, IsoBuster for off-site backups, Gamespy Arcade for irritating Americans, WinRAR for Hentai games, and CDRWIN for no-nonsense tune compilations. And much much more!

Need: The patience required to install all these fiddly little things

CD GUIDE

It's a hat trick! Three free games on three consecutive issues of PC PowerPlay. Does life get any better? We rather think not. Anyway, as Constant Readers will recall, on PCPP#76 we offered you the special enhanced version of Command & Conquer: The GDI Missions. Well, this month we complete your C&C Classic Collection with the complimentary Brotherhood of Nod mission disc. Does our generosity know any bounds?

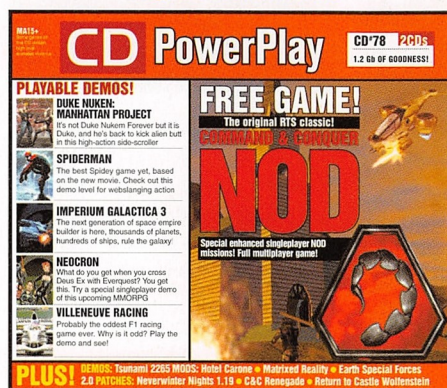
But perhaps you're not interested in free games. That's fine, because we've packed CD02 with chunkalicious demos including a rare Duke Nukem release, a sizeable chunk of Imperium Galactica 3, as well as Spiderman: The Movie.

But wait there's more! We've also included a couple of essential patches, foremost among them being Neverwinter Nights 1.19 which you will absolutely need to play this groundbreaking RPG online. And if you don't have NWN yet, now

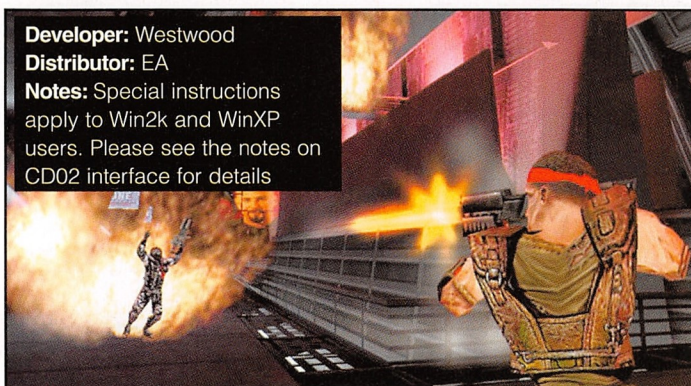
you have no excuse not to run right down to your local games emporium and pick up a copy. It's cheap at twice the price!

The PCPP coverdisc continues unabated so get stuck in and enjoy. But don't forget; DVD is all this and more, so perhaps rather than buying NWN you should grab a DVD-ROM drive instead. Flip back to page 110 to find out just how supremely worth it such an upgrade would be.

Paul Noone
CD Producer
cdgod@next.com.au



CD01 FREE GAME! C&C Nod Missions!

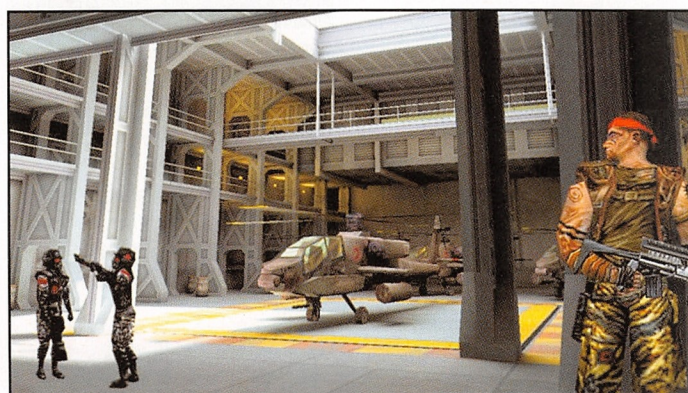


Complete your C&C Classic Collection right here and right now! These special enhanced NOD missions allow you to play the bad guys, and give full access to an entirely new arsenal of weaponry, including groovy scout bikes, attack choppers, flamer tanks and the terrifying nuclear missile! Stealth tanks are also a useful tool, since a pack of these will make short work of a lumbering squad of pain-in-the-arse

Mammoth Tanks. And Kane has such a cute little beard.

As an added bonus, you can even play multiplayer C&C with other PCPP readers who have either this disc or the GDI disc that came with PCPP#76. Now the only problem is, with a giveaway this good, where does CD PowerPlay go from here?

Need: A ridiculously low-end system. If you can't play this game, you're in serious trouble.



CD02 MODS AND UTILITIES



DUKE NUKEM
Manhattan Project

Developer: 3D Realms
Distributor: Some guy
Notes: A couple of 'ass-kickin' (sic) levels for your delectation

So the Duke is back, kind of temporarily, in a sort of side project while we all still pretend we're waiting for *snigger* Duke Nukem Forever. This old skool side-scroller brings back sweet memories of the original Apogee hits Duke Nukem and Duke Nukem 2, back when men were real men and graphics were EGA.

Need: P2-350, 32MB RAM, 8MB videocard, 200MB HDD



IMPERIUM GALACTICA 3
Dominate the galaxy!

Developer: Um...
Distributor: On the tip of my tongue
Notes: Massive demo for a massive game. Limited only by tech levels and size of galaxy

There are MOO2 fans and there are IG fans, and the two groups would meet on street corners and try and beat each other up. But their limp pasty muscles, atrophied from thousands of hours logged in on each game, meant damage they inflicted was minimal, so the nerds would slump home and log in again, lost to the world. Now you can be a nerd too!

Need: P3-450, 64MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 300MB HDD



NEOCRON
It's Deus Ex online! Kind of...

Developer: Reakktor
Distributor: Online
Notes: Special singleplayer demo of this MMORPG

This one was a little unexpected, emerging from the gloom with nary a fanfare. It's a first person shooter, but with a heavy RPG element, set in a futuristic, cyberpunk world highly reminiscent of Deus Ex. And the crazy thing is, it's a MMORPG. This demo, however, offers a specially tailored singleplayer taste of the goodness soon to follow.

Need: P3-450, 64MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 500MB HDD



SPIDERMAN
Game of the movie of the comic

Developer: Treyarch
Distributor: Activision
Notes: Slang your web all across New York in this two-level demo

Not to be confused with an earlier Spiderman game which is only based on the comic, not the movie of the comic, Spiderman: The Movie (the game) is a far finer and more faithful adaptation of the web-slanging antics of Peter Parker's alter ego. Phew! Rumour also has it a cheat code accesses the Kirsten Dunst wet T-shirt scene. See if you can find it.

Need: P3-450, 64MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 200MB HDD



TSUNAMI 2265
Colour me in, I'm a bad cartoon!

Developer: Prograph
Distributor: TBA
Notes: Manga-flavoured fun, complete with tentacles!

Previewed just last issue, this cel-shaded gem should do for anime on the PC what Duke Nukem did for possibly white-supremacist homo-eroticism. Combining beat-em-up, shoot-em-up, love triangle and Tomb-Raider style panty shots, it's even possible to jump into a giant robot and stomp those bitches who dissed you. Not that we encourage that sort of thing.

Need: P3-667, 128MB RAM, 32MB videocard, 500MB HDD



VILLENEUVE RACING
Weird, but fast

Developer: Ubi Soft
Distributor: Ubi Soft
Notes: Time trial only, single track, one car, hey we never promised you no rose garden

Straight from the biovats at Ubi Soft HQ (it's in France), it's nothing less than a futuristic Formula 1 racing game. Howl through the cities of the future in the car of tomorrow, secure in the knowledge that you have Villeneuve's fine name to back you up when you flip off the track into a crowd of schoolchildren. Oddball gaming at its oddest.

Need: P3-350, 64MB RAM, 16MB videocard, 200MB HDD



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS
The patch to end all patches?

Developer: BioWare
Distributor: Online
Notes: Version 1.19, vital patch to enable online playability

So you've beaten the thing in the last dungeon, you've got a Level 20 Rogue/Fighter with a special magic sword that lets her kill anything, and you need a new challenge. You need to go online and get stomped by a bunch of obsessed Koreans. And to do that, you need this patch. So install it! You crazy guy.

Need: Neverwinter Nights, 150MB HDD



MODS, MODS, MODS
Slap it upside the head!

Developer: Various and Sundry
Distributor: Online
Notes: Only the very best, hand picked from a litter of dozens

We here at PCPP are firm believers in quality over quantity. Plus since we had so many chunky demos this month we could only fit three mods on the CD. But boy are they pearly. You've got Hotel Carone for Deus Ex, Matrixed Reality for Max Payne and Earth Special Forces for crazy Dragonball Z fans. And UT.

Need: Deus Ex, Max Payne, Unreal Tournament and a machine capable of it all



Words: The Man in Black ■ Pictures: L Frank Weber

PCPP#79 onsale 25th September 2002



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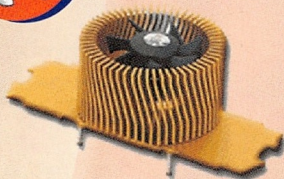
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VOLCANO II
For AMD Socket
462 UPTO 1.5 Ghz



VOLCANO P4 478

Designed for INTEL™ P4
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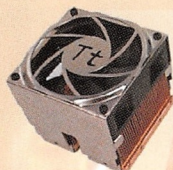
VOLCANO 6 / VOLCANO 6+

for AMD Athlon™:
XP 2100+, 2000+,
1900+, 1800+,
1700+, 1600+,
1500+ INTEL PIII
1.13GHz & TUALATIN
up to 2.0GHz



VOLCANO 7

Qualified for
AMD AthlonX
P series up to
2000+ or
INTEL Socket
370 & AMD
Socket 462



VOLCANO 7+

Application for
AMD 462 Athlon
XP 2600+ &
Intel 370 PIII or
application for
INTEL P4 SOCKET
478 upto 3.0 GHz



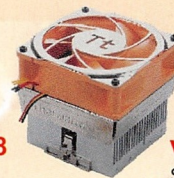
RACK MOUNT INTEL478 COOLER

for INTEL P4 478
PIN 1U Rack
Mount system up
to 2.0GHz



VOLCANO 8

APPLICATION
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XP UP TO 2200+



VOLCANO 9

SILENT SMART
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with Fan Speed
Setting Controller

CASE FANS



SMART CASE FAN

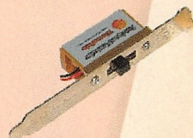
2 SPEED SMART FAN



SMART CASE FAN 2

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